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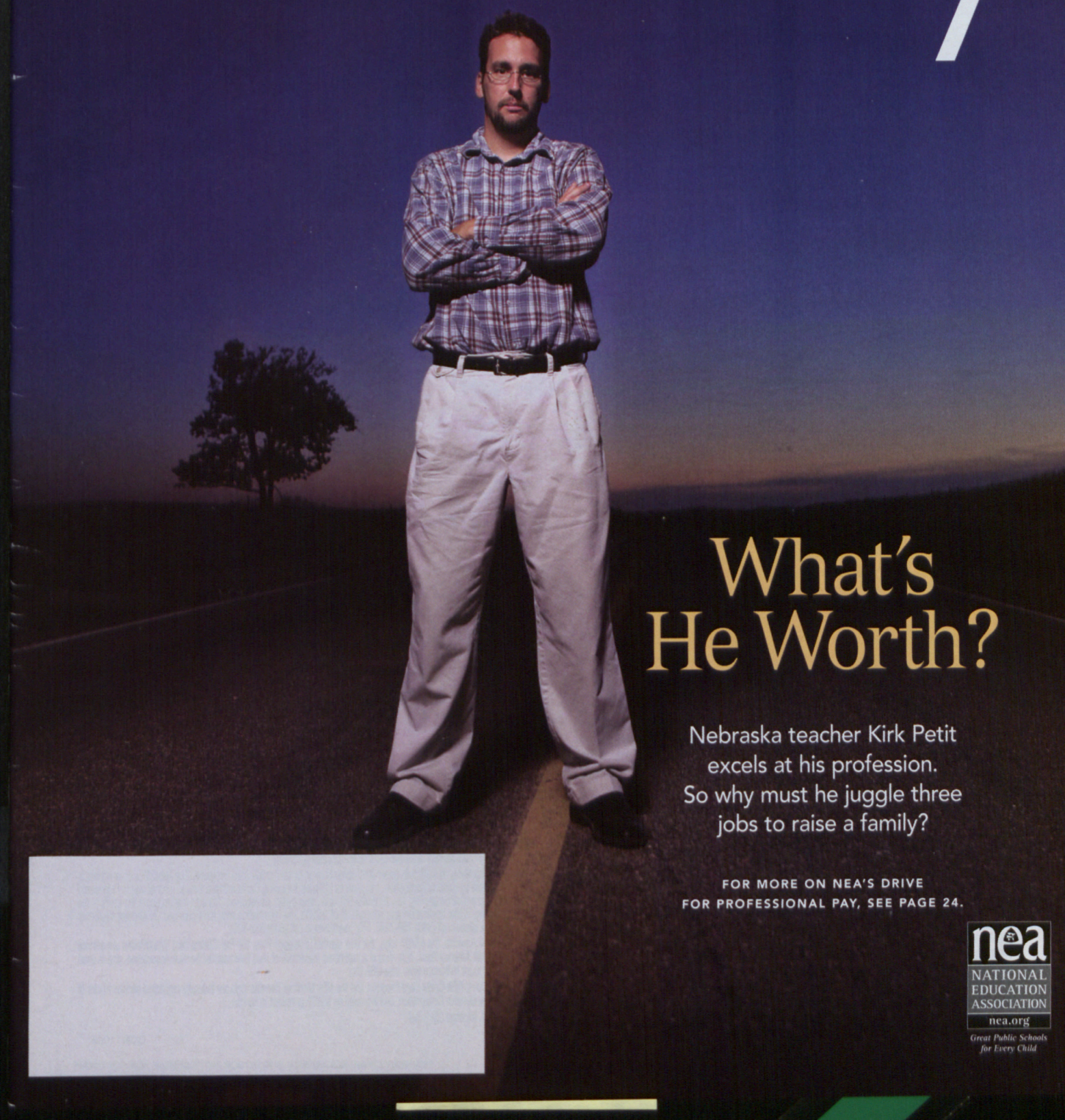

What's He Worth?

Nebraska teacher Kirk Petit excels at his profession. So why must he juggle three jobs to raise a family?

FOR MORE ON NEA'S DRIVE FOR PROFESSIONAL PAY, SEE PAGE 24.

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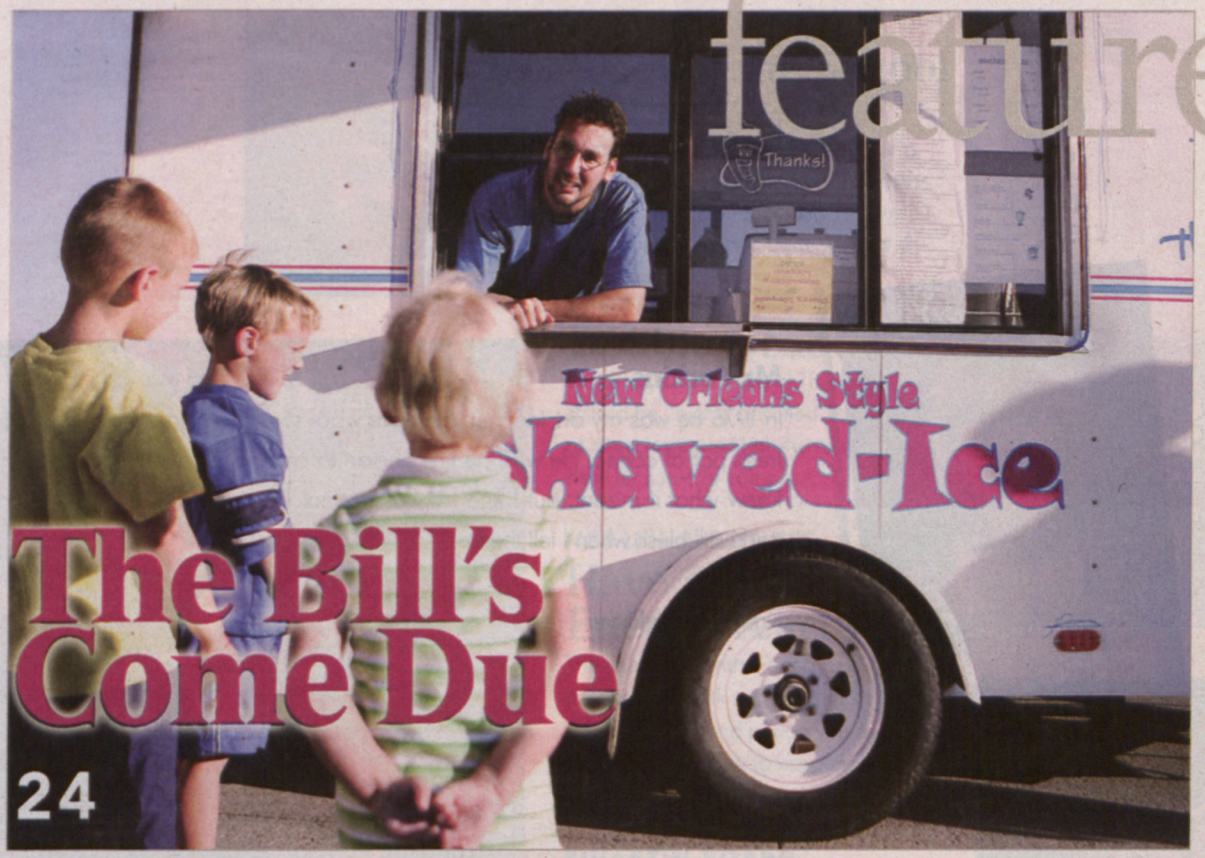
features



The Bill's Come Due

COVER 24

Low pay has increasing numbers of teachers and support professionals working second or third jobs, and some are leaving the profession altogether. NEA aims to change that with a new campaign that seeks a $40,000 minimum teacher salary and a living wage as starting pay for ESPs. The impact of the salary squeeze—and what you can do about it.

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Teachers are hitting the Web in a new way, as they guide students in exciting, online writing and collaboration. Called blogs, these Web journals are the latest way to inspire.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

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Grab your magnifying glass and notepad because we're trekking out and drafting the definitive scientific study of a varied and sometimes voracious breed.

PHOTO TOP: BOB ERVIN; BOTTOM: BOB DELONG; ILLUSTRATION: NANCY HARRISON

Mr. Perkins

"In 1976 he was my art teacher. He wore wool sweaters and always smelled like a fresh pot of coffee. He was the first person to call me 'creative.' I'm not even sure I knew what it meant, but I knew it was special. That was twenty-eight years ago, and I still blush when I tell the story."

Kristine, Jetta Driver

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PHOTO TOP LEFT: CHRISTIAN GOODEN; MIDDLE LEFT: TEO LANNIE
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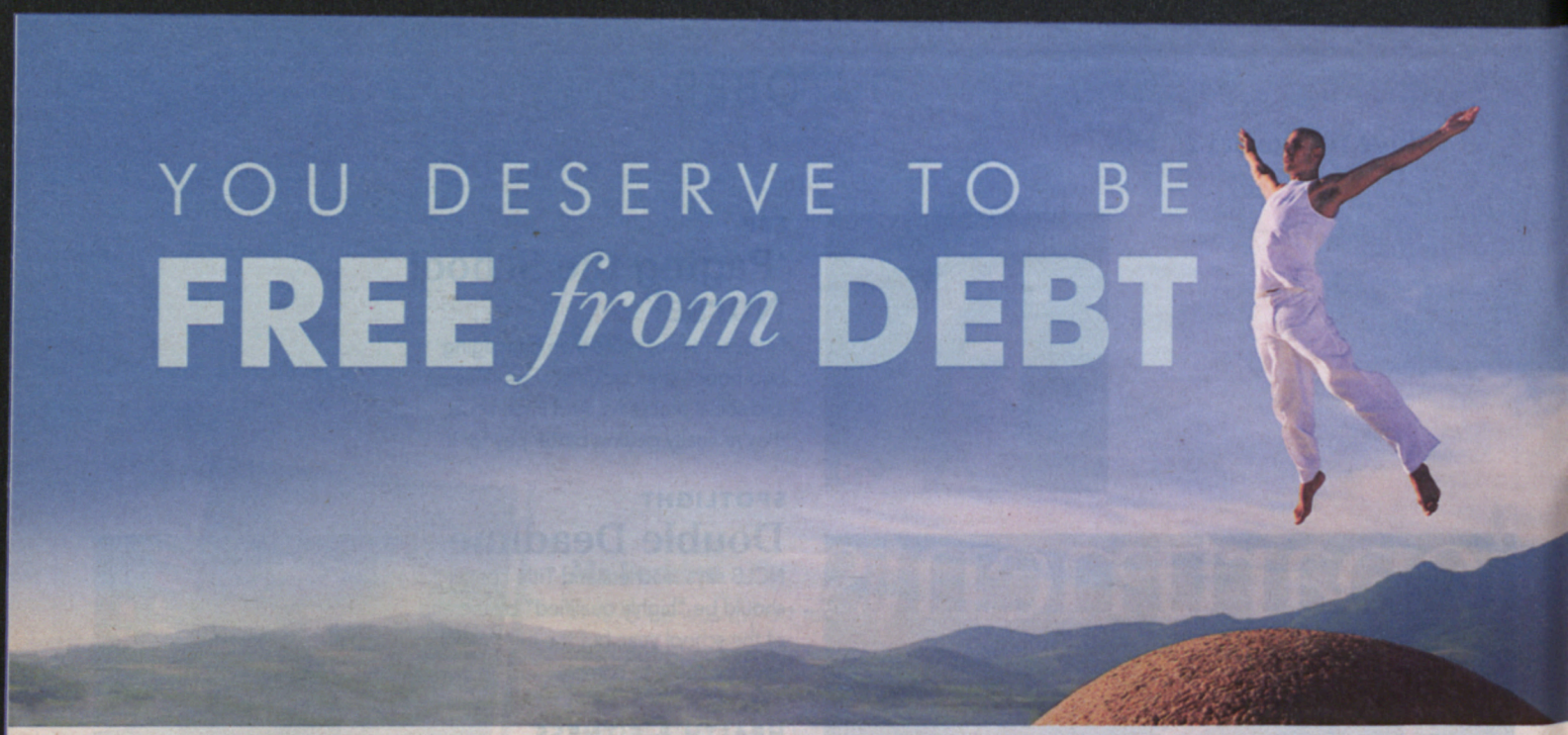

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$15,000	$694	$479	$371	$307	$265	$234
$25,000	N/A	$797	$618	$512	$441	$390

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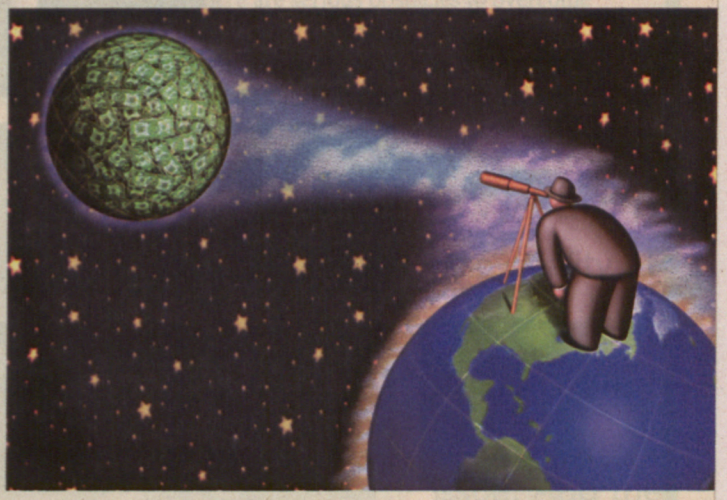
Seeing the Light

We don't often ring in the fall with a lament, but when the staff at *NEA Today* heard the story of Kirk Petit, a dedicated Nebraska teacher who works three jobs to make ends meet, we had to wonder: Could low pay *really* be wreaking this kind of despair on educators? Well, yes, and excuse the shock. ¶ Shamefully, as our cover story (page 24) notes, Petit is no anomaly, and the proof is in the numbers: teachers make less on average than people working in almost any comparable profession. The toll is personal, for sure. But it's also profession-wide: More often than not passionate folk with talent and chutzpah are saying thanks, but no thanks, when faced with the reality of their potential earning power in a public school. Meanwhile, the shining stars of the classroom, faced with mounting debt (and more testing, paperwork, and curious new laws), are packing up and bidding the schoolhouse adieu. ¶ It's why NEA is making an all-out push to sell the message that educators—and foremost the kids they nurture—are simply worth more. The pitch will not be easy: the public and its decision makers must shed decades-old assumptions about what educators with "all that time off" do and how hard they work. Only then can the down-and-dirty work of bringing salaries up to par begin. ¶ It's not an impossible row to hoe, but it does require that every educator play a role. So as you forge into autumn, roll up a sleeve, kick up a little dust, and join the campaign. Then celebrate the power of your work. I say that with great sincerity as I sign off, with this issue, as editor of *NEA Today*. Other paths beckon, but I'll be following them with a grateful eye on all those steady-handed public educators like you who—yes, despite the pay—ushered me down that first and most important path: to high school graduation. Thanks for continuing to carry that banner, and for the honor of allowing me and the exceptional staff at *NEA Today* a place in your lives. ¶ Keep writing and calling. Keep celebrating. And don't forget to say a thing or two the next time somebody asks, "Why more pay?" With your collective wisdom writ large, the nation is bound to see the light.



Marilyn Milloy

EDITOR MARILYN MILLOY

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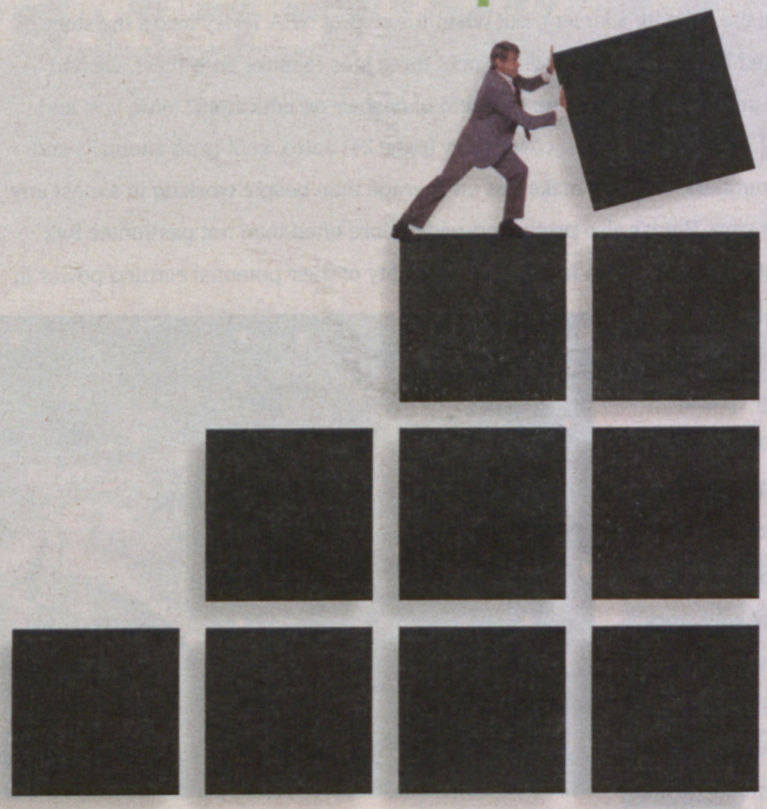

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Great Public Schools for Every Child

Professional Pay for Professionals: A Cause Worth Fighting For

The facts speak for themselves. Teacher salaries are falling further and further behind the salaries of non-teacher professionals. College-educated non-teachers now make over 50 percent more than the average earnings of a teacher. And male college-educated non-teachers make 60 percent more than male teachers.

In 1960, the gap between a college-educated non-teacher and a teacher was $1,585. Today it is more than $18,600.

The only question is, what are we going to do about it? History teaches us that trend is not necessarily destiny. Good people working together on commonly agreed upon goals can create their own destiny.

And that is exactly what Team NEA aims to do. We are going to crank up the volume on the issue of salaries. We are going to activate our members. We are going to reinvigorate the culture of advocacy within our organization—one where educators are neither embarrassed nor ashamed about standing up for themselves and their profession.

And there's plenty to motivate us. Low teacher pay comes at a very high cost. It is one of the major contributors to high teacher turnover, which has a very negative impact on all students, but especially the poor and minority students.

More than one-third of teachers who do not plan to stay in teaching blame low pay. For male teachers that number is 43 percent, for teachers under 30 it is 47 percent, and for minority teachers it is 50 percent. In other words, the very groups we are aiming to recruit and retain are leaving the profession because of poor compensation.

Low teacher pay is a quality of education issue—a student achievement issue. And the good news is that the public understands this. A Phi Delta Kappa-Gallup Poll found that 88 percent of the public would support raising teacher salaries to address the teacher recruitment and retention challenge. What's more, the recent Teaching Commission survey shows that 70 percent of the public favors raising teacher salaries across the board, *even if* it requires higher taxes.

Team NEA is calling for a minimum starting salary of at least $40,000 for all teachers and a living wage for all education support professionals. But improved salaries for all school employees are not going to just happen—we are going to have to fight for them.

The research is clear. By increasing teacher pay, we will increase teacher quality, which, in turn, will increase student achievement. Poor and minority students in particular will benefit as caring, experienced, and skilled teachers replace the revolving door faculty.

And by becoming the "go to" organization on school employee compensation, NEA will also build its membership.

But let's face it, there are serious obstacles to overcome along the road to higher school employee salaries.

While we are fortunate that the public understands the realities of the classroom and the importance of a quality public education, we must focus our attention on the policy makers. Many would say that the intrinsic rewards of teaching justify paying teachers less. And it is true that teaching can provide professional satisfaction and warm your heart in ways other professions cannot. But how can you expect educators to be focused, committed, and at their best on a daily basis when they are fearful of the consequences of not earning enough to support their families?

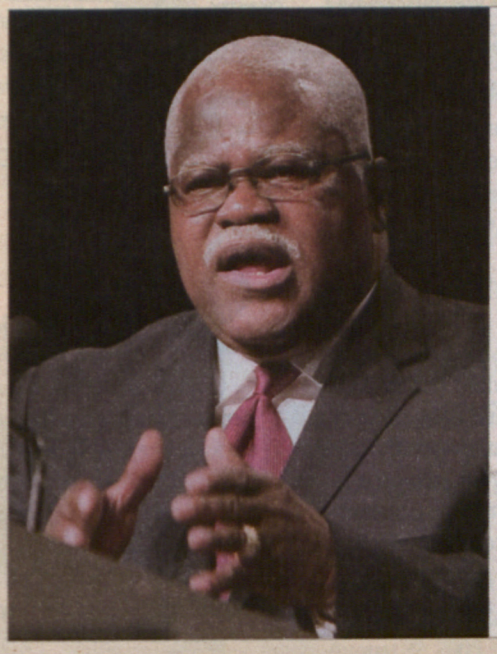


PHOTO: CALVIN KNIGHT

"Low teacher pay is a quality of education issue—a student achievement issue. And the good news is that the public understands this."
–REG WEAVER

Many policy makers profess their devotion to children and public education, yet they have failed to support legislation that would provide the funds necessary to pay teachers and other education employees salaries that reflect their professionalism. We must give them the courage, and the incentive, to do what they know is right.

TEAM NEA is proud to advocate for professional salaries for you—you deserve it!

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

The D Words—Discipline and Drollery

In your 25 discipline tips ("The D Word," cover story, September), you missed an important one—HUMOR. At the start of my 39 years of teaching in high school, I felt I needed to develop a "teacher look"—and there was occasion for it at times. But eventually I found that the method that worked best for me, kept my blood pressure low, and prevented students from turning hostile was humor.

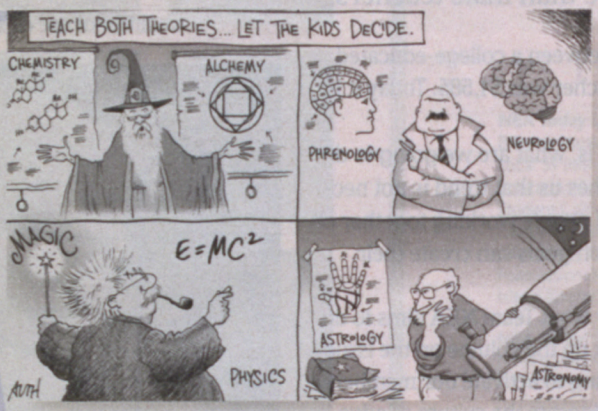
In order to use humor, teachers have to be able to laugh at themselves along with others, but it's a decision a teacher can make on the spot. A few words or acts can defuse a lot of potential classroom bombs and pave the way for good relationships with students that carry on for years.

VERNON GILLILAND
Liberal, Kansas

While I enjoyed your 25 tips for instilling discipline, I found the introductory essay depressing. Worse than all of the negative statistics was the Orwellian use of the phrase "unhappy zenith."

Perhaps irony was intended, but the zenith is the highest point in an arc. When things truly can't get any worse, we have reached the "nadir."

ERIC LARSEN
Rancho Cordova, California



WHACKED OUT

Regarding the September Debate: What a shock that you should even ask such a question! ("Would you support corporal punishment's use in your school?")

Corporal punishment is a blatant abuse of power and totally ineffective. It teaches children that problems are solved with violence, that the strongest person always wins, and that our culture says we like things that way. Even if that is true, we have the capability and the tools to aim for a higher degree of civilization and civility.

The only way to elicit the good behavioral results we want is to allow children to view themselves as capable and secure. We provide the supervision, structure, and intrinsic rewards.

MARIETTA TERET
Baltimore, Maryland

I can tell the kids who get a swat or two from those who don't. Give me that student who knows the hand. I only have to say "stop" once!

DIANA SJOBERG
Las Vegas, Nevada

A FAMILY CELEBRATION

For the first time, I had the privilege of attending this year's Representative Assembly in Los Angeles ("Leading the Way," September), and I was moved to tears on many occasions during the convention. One such time was during the singing of "America the Beautiful" on the Fourth of July as I stood with the Arkansas Delegation.

I must say, although I have been a speech-language pathologist in the public schools for 28 years, and have always been a member of our organization, I didn't always have time to devote to the Association. I would recommend this commitment to everyone.

I have to thank my local and state organizations, CSEA and CEA, and the wonderful colleagues who helped me navigate my first national convention. In addition, thank you to my fellow "brothers and sisters" (as Reg Weaver called all of us) from many state organizations

CYBER-COMMENTARY

No Bargain Here

I used to love Wal-Mart for its convenience, its low prices, and, as dumb as it now seems, for the old person who greeted me each time I walked through the door. Now that I see the high cost of those low prices I cannot in good conscience support them with my business. I'm no radical, but I do believe that companies should take care of their own people instead of letting the taxpayers take care of them.

FROM WWW.SHUTUPANDTEACH.ORG

More school, less learning

What provides much of the impetus for this lengthening of the school year? Standardized testing, of course....Twenty more days spent drilling for the latest acronymic, multiple-choice, trivial pursuit session does not equal "increased academic rigor." Increased boredom and frustration, perhaps, but not rigor.

FROM WWW.WILDWILLIAM.BLOGSPOT.COM

WANT TO WEIGH IN?

Chat with your colleagues on NEA's discussion boards at **www.neatoday.org/talkback.html**.

who were so welcoming, delightful, and supportive as I made my way through the "ins and outs" of being a novice.

JEANNE WILLIAMS
Colorado Springs, Colorado

EDUCATING TEACHERS

When "experts" list areas for improvement in our schools, rarely do they note one critical area— the colleges of teacher education. These college teachers and colleges of teaching have little, if any, accountability.

We need to insist that we classroom teachers participate in the training of future teachers. This might include: hiring active, successful classroom teachers to teach relevant college courses; requiring college teachers to teach kids for at least one complete term every two years; and inviting classroom teachers to sit in on college education classes to observe and evaluate.

Also, two courses should be required in every college of education: a course on storytelling and improvisational speech, and a course focused on developing positive, interpersonal communication.

ROBERT RUBINSTEIN
Eugene, Oregon

ZERO INSPIRATION

Ignorance they say is bliss, but that is no excuse to take it out on students because of your antiquated, outdated rules on giving a zero. ("Talkback," September) Every time you give a zero, you skew the results negatively. To stop the skewing because of the large difference between 64 (a D-grade) and 0 you should never give a grade lower than 10 points below your lowest passing grade (say, a 55). With that, the student can work to improve his numerical grade and that equates to "fairness."

RUSSELL CADMAN
Union Gap, Washington

HURRICANE KATRINA

Thousands of NEA members and their students have been affected by the destructive force of Hurricane Katrina. For information on how our educators and schools are surviving and how to help students deal with disaster, go to **www.nea.org/presscenter/katrina.html**.

In addition NEA, through the NEA Health Information Network, is collecting donations that will be delivered in the affected states. To contribute, make checks payable to NEA HIN/Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund, 1201 16th St., N.W., Suite 216, Washington, DC 20036.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

"THE REWARDS of teaching... they're not in your paycheck."
—FLORIDA MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER SUSAN HEMINGS Orlando Sentinel, *August 15, 2005*

"EVOLUTION'S CRITICS take their views out to basically an uneducated scientific populace and say, 'You have to choose between science and faith.' The public tends to respond by saying, 'Well, if there's a conflict, we choose God.' Our point is, there's not an inherent conflict."
—RETIRED BIOLOGY TEACHER AND PRESIDENT OF KANSAS CITIZENS FOR SCIENCE HARRY E. MCDONALD Education Week, *August 31, 2005*

"YOU NEED TO GIVE funding if you're going to be asking for testing every year. I mean, money does not come out of thin air."
—CONNECTICUT MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER MICHELLE LACCONE, IN RESPONSE TO HER STATE'S NCLB-RELATED FEDERAL LAWSUIT *National Public Radio: "All Things Considered," August 22, 2005*

LET'S TALK

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of four ways:

BY MAIL: Write to Letters, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036

THROUGH THE WEB: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday, look for the "Talk Back!" section, click on "Letter to the Editor," and fill out the form.

BY E-MAIL: Write to neatoday@nea.org

BY FAX: 202-822-7206

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

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upfront

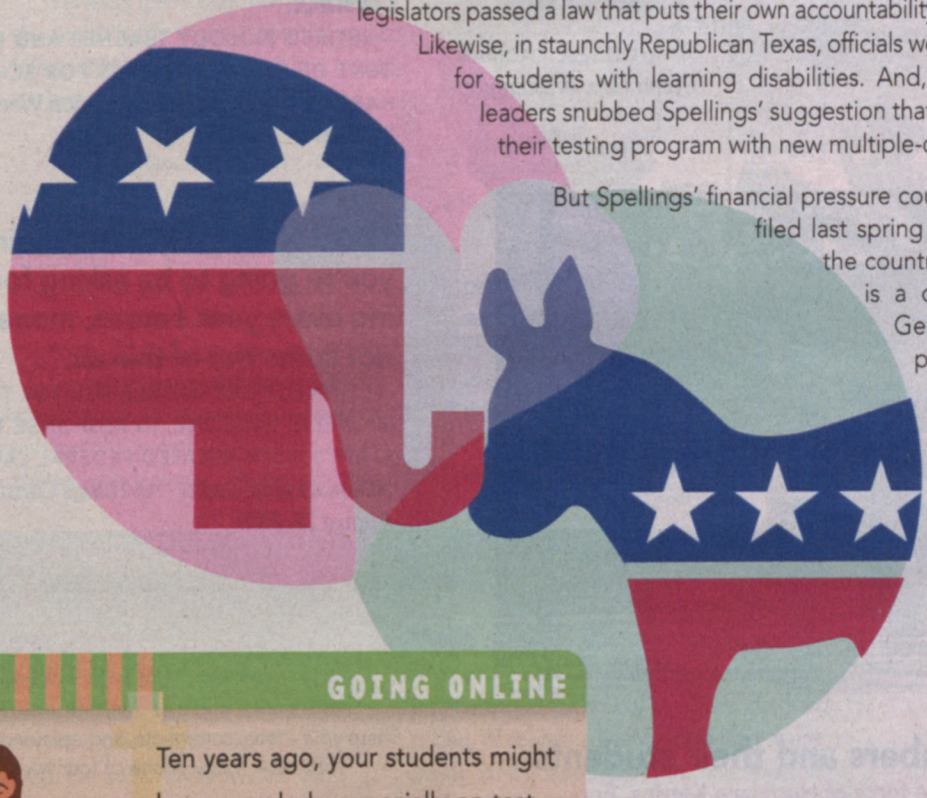
Trends
Facts
Innovators
Wisdom
Research
First 5
News
Quotes
Humor

Seeing Red (and Blue)

Is common sense coming back? After three years and much agony, a national consensus is emerging that the so-called No Child Left Behind law needs major changes, not just small adjustments. That and some serious funding.

WHILE NEA takes the lead with its "fix and fund" campaign, we're joined by states from across the spectrum—from Utah, the most Republican state in the union, to mostly blue Connecticut.

In Utah, despite Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings' threat to yank the state's federal funding, legislators passed a law that puts their own accountability system ahead of the federal rules. Likewise, in staunchly Republican Texas, officials were defying her inflexible standards for students with learning disabilities. And, in Connecticut, state education leaders snubbed Spellings' suggestion that they find the cash to water down their testing program with new multiple-choice-only questions.



But Spellings' financial pressure could be prevented if NEA's lawsuit, filed last spring with school districts from across the country, succeeds. The basis of the suit is a clause in the law that, as NEA General Counsel Bob Chanin pointed out, you don't need a law degree to understand: "Nothing in this act shall be construed to... mandate a State or any subdivision thereof to spend any funds or incur any costs not paid for under this Act."

GOING ONLINE

Ten years ago, your students might have goggled—especially on test days—but probably not Googled. Now, 93 percent of American classrooms are wired for Internet access, according to *Education Week*'s Technology Counts 2005.

[STATISTIC]

8

The percentage of **CHILDREN** who will celebrate **HALLOWEEN** this month.

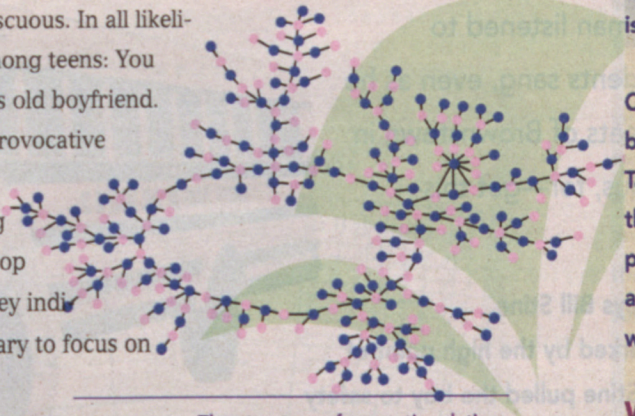
ILLUSTRATION TOP: GROFF CREATIVE; ILLUSTRATION BOTTOM: PETER HAMLIN

The Seeds of Romance

HERE'S HOW IT GOES IN HIGH-SCHOOL ROMANCE: Anthony "hooks up" with Britney, then Britney moves on to Craig, who eventually ditches her for Deborah, who leaves him a few months later for Everett (but never for Anthony), and so on down the line.

What you get, according to an Ohio State University professor who studied the sexual habits of teens at a Midwestern high school, is a long chain. Many students have one or two partners—very few are really promiscuous. In all likelihood, it reflects the old standard among teens: You can't date your old flame's new girl's old boyfriend.

The findings don't just make a provocative map—they also should help target sexually transmitted diseases among teens. While it may be possible to stop disease among adults by stopping key individuals, this study shows it's necessary to focus on broad interventions among teens.



The structure of romantic relations at "Jefferson High School"
Each dot represents a student—pink for girls and blue for boys—and lines connecting students represent a sexual link between the two.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS RULE

Public schools aren't just free and democratic—they're also actually better at boosting student achievement than private schools, according to a new study.

While the average private school student does score better on achievement tests than his or her public school counterpart, researchers at the University of Illinois say it's because private school students come from richer, more educated homes. (Makes sense, no?) With a level playing field, it's the public schools that win.

To come to this conclusion, the research team looked at math scores from more than 1,000 public and private schools that participated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. When students had similar parents, in terms of both income and education, public school students came out on top.

Capitol Report

New Teacher Aid

The money that you spend on your students isn't pocket change. In a survey last year, NEA found the average teacher spends about $443. Still, just $250 can be deducted from your federal taxes, and it gets worse—that deduction is set to expire in 2005.

Now, U.S. Rep. Dave Camp, a California Republican, has filed a bill (H.R. 2989) called The Teacher Tax Relief Act that would increase the deduction to $400 and make it permanent. Learn more about it and give the bill your support at www.nea.org/lac/edtax/.

Who Should Pay?

The Supreme Court is expected to hear arguments this month in a case involving the parents of a student with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, who say Maryland's Montgomery County public schools provided inadequate IEP services. They want to be reimbursed for private school tuition.

The question is, must the parents prove the program's inadequacy to get the cash, as the district claims? Or does the burden fall to the school district to prove the programs do fit the bill? In June, the Bush Administration filed a brief supporting Montgomery County.

Have a great idea?

> Send it by mail:
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1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

> Send it by e-mail:
neatoday@nea.org

ILLUSTRATION TOP: AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY; PHOTO BOTTOM: COMSTOCK IMAGES

A Right Turn

How many verses of "100 Bottles of Beer on the Wall" can one man stand? Most parents would say none. But one remarkable Illinois man listened to everything the students sang, even as he negotiated the streets of Brownstown in his yellow school bus, for—get this—44 years.

It's been a long, rewarding ride for bus driver **Bill Stine,** who retired after 44 years behind the wheel.

"I loved the drive," says Bill Stine.

It was a career marked by the high point of saving a child's life—Stine pulled the boy to safety when a speeding car illegally passed the stopped bus—but also a low when aggrieved students, upset that Stine had assigned them seats, accused him of roughing them up. It was years before one of the students came clean and admitted the lie.

Both events show Stine's ability to persevere and his commitment to children despite adversity, says Illinois UniServ Director Marcus Albrecht. "He's just a quiet, easy-going guy," says Stine's colleague, custodian Dave Arnold. "He would do anything to help out a child."

—MEGHA RAJAGOPALAN

FUN FOCUS

PLEASED TO MEET YOU!

You're not wasting time in the teachers' lounge—you're investing in your health! A team of Australian scientists has determined that good friends, in old age especially, actually help you live longer.

In the study, which took health and lifestyle into account, the folks with the strongest network of friends outlasted their lonely peers—including ones with plenty of kin. Probably pals encourage you to look after your health and help reduce depression and anxiety.

PHOTO TOP: KATIE THAMAN/LEADER-UNION

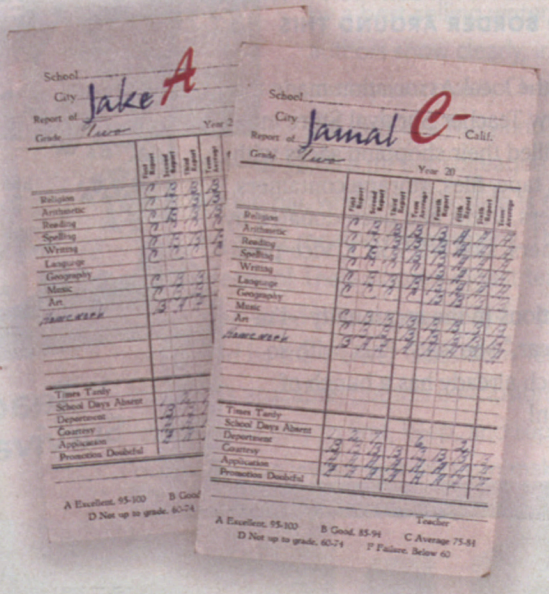
WHAT'S NOT IN A NAME

EXPECT MORE FROM EBONY

DO YOU THINK EBONY IS AS SMART AS EMILY? Unfortunately, the answer might be no.

A University of Florida (UF) professor, who examined academic data on more than 50,000 students with identifiably African-American and Caucasian names, found that Demetrius and Deja paid a price for those handles. When teachers and administrators selected students for gifted programs, a "Jake" was more likely to get the nod than a "Jamal"—even if they had identical test scores.

It's about low expectations, says UF's David Figlio—and eventually it translates into lower test scores for the kids. When checking into sibling pairs, one with a "regular" name and the other with a "racial" name, he found the kids who had names associated with low socioeconomic status scored lower in reading and math. Meanwhile, siblings with Asian-sounding names did better than their Anglo-sounding sisters and brothers!



24 [STATISTIC] The **COST** of a school **LUNCH,** according to 2005 USDA reimbursements.

Trick or Treat!

BE A GOOD WITCH THIS HALLOWEEN. CONSIDER TAKING PART IN A TRICK-OR-TREATING TRADITION THAT DATES BACK TO 1950.

That's when a group of children not only called out for candy but also collected cash for UNICEF. Last year, kids collected $4.6 million, much of it in school groups. And, while students here learned the value of being good global citizens, children around the world benefited too. To order your educational materials for the 2005 Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF campaign, call 1-800-4UNICEF or visit www.unicefusa.org. Also check out year-round resources, including information on the recent tsunami, at www.TeachUNICEF.org.

Notepad

Hit the Brakes!

School bus drivers nationwide have more time to complete new federal licensing requirements, thanks to lobbying by NEA and its state affiliates.

Originally, the law required all school bus drivers to get a special endorsement on their licenses by September 30. But, as the school year approached, it was clear that several states weren't prepared to administer the necessary written and road skills tests. Weeks before the deadline, under union pressure, Congress delayed the "S" endorsement for one year.

Held Accountable

Small class sizes, little bureaucracy, and near total freedom from regulation—with all that, charter school students should soar above the rest. But do they?

Well, no.

After much digging, researcher Gerald Bracey found charter school students rarely ace their public school peers. And, even though most charter schools promise to boost achievement rates or shut down, these stringent accountability standards aren't a reality. Only a tiny percentage of charter schools have been shut down, and only 0.5 percent of those were closed for academic reasons.

Got a good story?

> Send it by mail:
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Washington, DC 20036

> Send it by e-mail:
neatoday@nea.org

PHOTO TOP: PHOTODISC; PHOTO BOTTOM: RUBBERBALL

Survival Shopping

When new teachers walk into their classrooms, it isn't the students that scare them—it's the blank walls and empty supply closet.

FIRST 5 YEARS

WHERE'S THE PAPER? AND MY STAPLER? ISN'T THERE SUPPOSED TO BE A CUTE BORDER AROUND THIS BULLETIN BOARD?

In Kansas City, Kansas, the local Association made the shopping easy—and free—at a New Teacher Survival Store in August. Dozens of new teachers filled their shopping sacks with set-up essentials, including paper, tape, files, storage containers, and yes, even bulletin board borders. Items had been donated by local businesses and retiring teachers, said NEA-KCK Vice-president Marsha Longabach.

"We've made so many connections in the community—I'm already looking forward to next year," she says. Plus, with so many grateful members, Longabach already has a bunch of enthusiastic volunteers to count on!

TRADE SECRETS

The skills you use on the job can help another member with a dilemma on the home front.

▶ **THIS MONTH:** Bus mechanic Paul Comuso of Blackwood, New Jersey, unlocks the secrets to getting good car service.

A Fix for Your Wheels

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS. The brakes on your old Camry are making a racket. Where do you head—the corner garage, McBrakes out on Route 1, or your Toyota dealership? Get some recommendations from neighbors or friends, Comuso advises. "If you have a common problem...with your tires or brakes, you're probably better off taking it to someone who specializes in that problem." The dealership's a better choice if the work is complicated or your warranty will cover the bill.

BUILD A RELATIONSHIP. Try a recommended shop when you need routine work, like an oil change or tire rotation. "See what you think of the place, and how they treat you," says Comuso. "You have to find someone you can trust." Once you get comfortable, ask for a written estimate for work that may need to be done, such as checking into that mysterious noise that only appears at high speed.

JUST SAY 'NO.' Many shops love to sell you extra services. They'll change your oil and then hit you with, "Your brakes are half-way gone," says Comuso. Often these add-on services come at premium prices. Your comeback? "What absolutely needs to be done right now?" Unless you're confident the work is necessary and the price is right, ask for a written estimate and compare it to at least one other shop.

GOT A TIP TO SHARE?

We're looking for forensics or theater teachers to advise fellow members on how to **calm your nerves and speak in public.** If you'd like to be considered, e-mail **clong@nea.org** with your name and local, a brief description of what you do, and your top three tips.

PHOTO TOP: NATHAN HAM; PHOTO BOTTOM: NICK CLEMENTS

GOOD READING

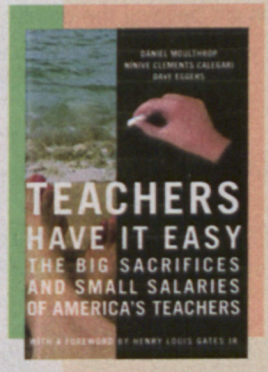
ON THE WEB:

After a long, long day in the classroom, in the cafeteria, or behind the wheel of a school bus, what do you want to curl up and read? We want your help in compiling good reading lists for your colleagues. Got any recommendations for new teachers? Who do you read for inspiration? Or for entertainment? What authors help you do a better job? Or fulfill your after-school hobbies? Tell us, please, by sending your lists to neatoday-reply@list.nea.org.

[STATISTIC]

The number of **APPLES** passed out in **FINNISH** railway stations to mark World Teachers Day on October 5.

BOOK FOCUS



Pay Now or Later

MAYBE YOU DON'T NEED to read this book, but somebody sure does. In *Teachers Have It Easy: The Big Sacrifices and Small Salaries of America's Teachers*, written by a best-selling writer, a teacher, and a journalist, the authors show clearly, in depressing detail, just how very little money you make. Check out the chapter comparing days in the lives of a Maryland algebra teacher and a pharmaceutical salesman—at 12:10 p.m. our colleague is tutoring AP calculus and lunching on a protein bar, while Mr. Goodlife is eating Copper River salmon and charging a $62 meal to his company. This is why great teachers are leaving the profession! The authors suggest teachers need to be paid more—a great idea—and they suggest pay-for-performance programs, like the one promoted by the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, may be the way to go. That's arguable, but this conclusion is not: "People must be clear that spending money to find, keep, and support the best teachers is simply the most effective investment they can make in the future of their children, their communities, and their country."

A hit melody

Making noise and hitting things are favorite pastimes of any self-respecting third-grader. Now music teachers can combine the two and teach harmonies at the same time using a new addition to the percussion family that has become a staple at elementary schools across the country: Boomwhackers.

THESE DURABLE PLASTIC TUBES range from 8 inches to 4 feet in length and come in seven vibrant colors, one for each note on the do-re-mi scale. By associating each color with its corresponding note, children learn to differentiate between pitches.

Mary-Hannah Klontz, a music teacher at Barrett Elementary in Arlington, Virginia, started using them three years ago—with great success. "I'm always interested in toys that can teach because that's where children's hearts and minds are."

—MEGHA RAJAGOPALAN

PHOTO BOTTOM: WHACKY MUSIC/WWW.BOOMWHACKERS.COM

Is there a new teacher in the family?

Teaching is hereditary—it tends to run in families. If you have a son or daughter—or even a niece or nephew—who's graduating from student teaching to the real thing, consider a graduation gift befitting the occasion. **The NEA Professional Library** has the gifts you need to help get all the graduates on your list off to a great start!

Your daughter

will be heading up her own classroom in a few months. Give her a leg up with our best-selling **Graduation Gift Pack**, featuring three great handbooks for teaching rookies.

Countdown to the First Day of School lays out a step-by-step checklist that'll have her poised and ready to succeed the day the school doors open.

Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers offers the sensible strategies she'll never read in any textbook.

Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers provides the sort of usable advice that every teacher needs and few teachers get.

Item #2170-3-0S-D
Get all three books for a special NEA members-only price of **$12.95**
—a regular $14.50 value ($18.85 for nonmembers) if purchased separately.

Item #2014-6-00-D
NEA Members: **$16.95**
Nonmembers: **$20.95**

Your son

will have his hands full those first few weeks of school, trying to put all he learned in class into practice. Give him a wealth of knowledge from experienced teachers with ***The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)***. He'll learn proven strategies for surviving those critical first weeks of school.

Your niece

is eager to let the world know she's a teacher and proud of it! Give her a gift to show that America's educators love what they do, and it shows!

Item #4914-4-00-D (gray) or
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Igniting Activists

A program aimed at turning new teachers into young leaders is sparking interest in Florida.

Rokaisha Bell joined the union last year, during her first few months in a Florida high school, but wasn't sure exactly what she was getting out of it. That is, until she met NEA Executive Committee member Becky Pringle.

Last spring, Pringle chatted with 20 or so new Volusia County teachers at a three-day professional development gig facilitated by the Florida Education Association (FEA). It's called the Sparks program—for the young teachers who light up their schools and Association—and it's modeled after a very successful Washington Education Association (WEA) program.

"It's incredible!" Pringle exclaims. "I wish we could duplicate it everywhere." As it is, this popular, but expensive, approach to developing excellent teachers and new leaders has spread from Alaska to Connecticut.

Florida Sparks participants got inspired about their profession and their union during a three-day program.

"Our younger members are telling us they care about professional issues. They want to do their jobs better," Pringle says. "Sparks focuses on giving them tools they actually can use—and they're amazed to see what the union is doing to help them meet their professional goals."

During three days—free from TV and telephones—participants learned how to keep students on task, talk effectively with parents, invest for retirement, and a great deal more about their Association. They began to feel, Bell says, "like I'm worth something. I'm not a peon—I have a voice in what's going on."

Her voice is one that the Association wants to hear more from. And it's not just because Bell is African-American, though that plays a role: In Volusia, Blacks represent a fraction of Association leadership, says Andrew Spar, Volusia Teachers Organization president. Bell's appeal is also her youth.

"Not only do we have a million of our members retiring in the next five years, but with those members go our leaders," Pringle says. "I can't think of a state where it's not an issue."

Sparks is the answer. Designed to appeal to newer members by offering the kind of professional support they need, the program also helps them feel part of a like-minded, fun group of folks.

"They've got to find that sense of support and community, so that they enjoy the work," Pringle says. Taking on a leadership role in the union is not easy. To attract young people, "they've got to be with each other. You have to build friendships."

The Sparks program starts on a Friday—to do it right, the host Association pays for substitutes, unless the local district will ante up. Then, until Sunday, participants attend seminars, ask questions, and share their own stories.

"SPARKS FOCUSES ON giving [younger members] tools they actually can use—and then they're amazed to see what the union is doing."

—BECKY PRINGLE

And it takes money. The Volusia program, which focused on Black and Hispanic teachers, had a $5,000 budget, says FEA's Susan Jones. "It's probably a high-cost item for a lot of locals, but you're building leaders and activism, and you're creating a wonderful environment that is pro-union."

Since then, some "sparks" have attended FEA's summer institute, and all offered to serve on local or state committees. "Even if you get just one more involved, you're doing well," Spar says.

So count Rokaisha Bell as evidence of a job well done.

"After just these couple of days, we felt we'd known each other forever," she says. "It's kind of like a support group—we're all moving in the same direction."

—MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

Sparks at a Glance

WHAT IT IS: A three-day seminar that brings together members with less than five years' experience and gives them lots of professional development and a new enthusiasm for the Association.

BENEFITS: When members learn about bargaining, employee rights, and the many ways that unions work for them, they're inspired to take on leadership roles in the Association.

FOR MORE: The Washington Education Association has a successful model, which can be adapted with few changes to other states. For more information on WEA's program, call or e-mail Diane Flynn, 425-258-3697, dflynn@washingtonEA.org or Eddie Westerman, 253-765-7036, ewesterman@washingtonEA.org.

PHOTO: FEA

¡Hispanic heritage month!

September 15th through October 15th

CELEBRATE LIFE. CAPTURE EVERY MOMENT.

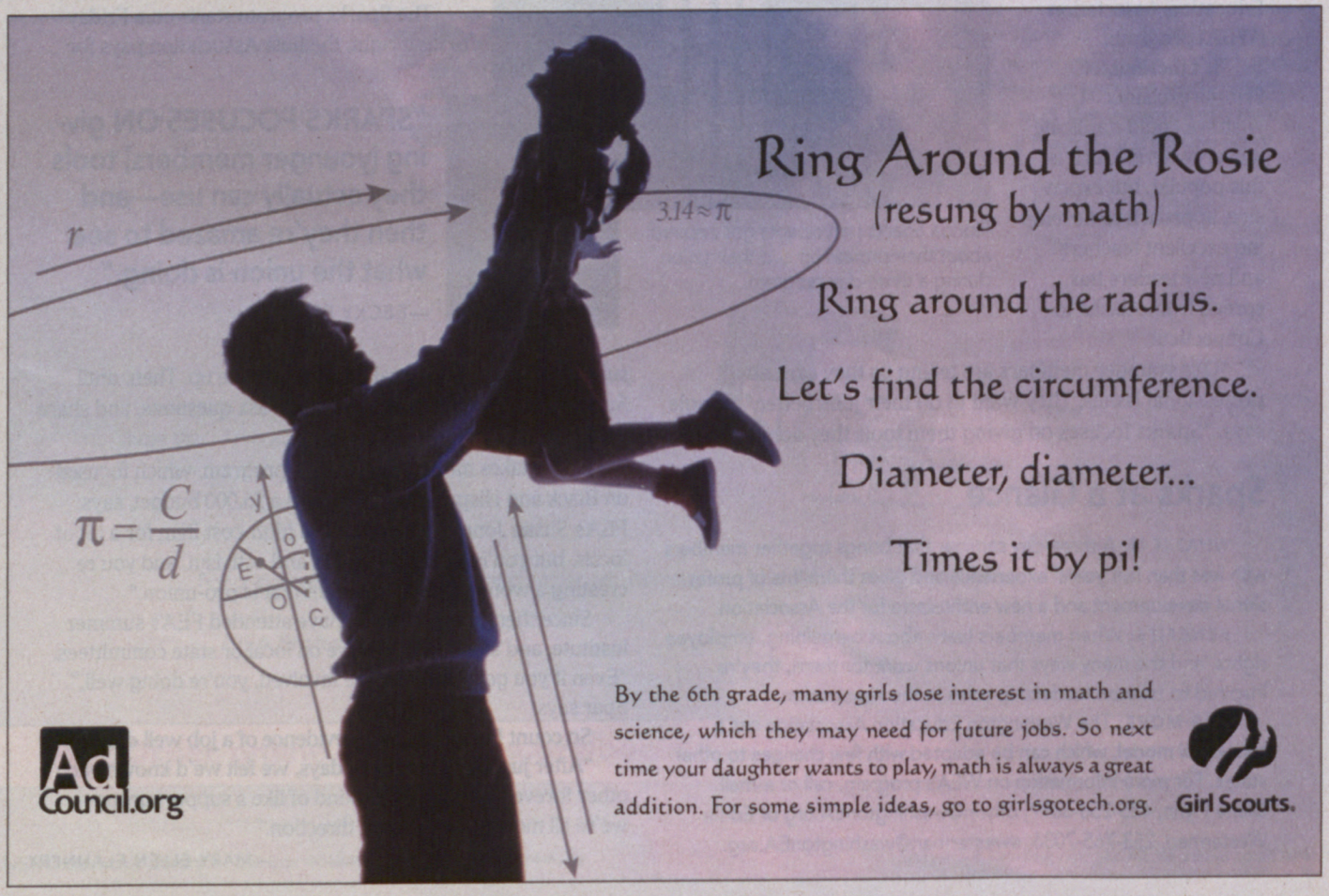
Your students can capture the richness of Latino heritage and

WIN UP TO $2000.

for more information and official contest rules, please visit History.com/classroom/hhm

THE HISTORY CHANNEL en español

THE HISTORY CHANNEL.



Ring Around the Rosie
(resung by math)

Ring around the radius.

Let's find the circumference.

Diameter, diameter...

Times it by pi!

By the 6th grade, many girls lose interest in math and science, which they may need for future jobs. So next time your daughter wants to play, math is always a great addition. For some simple ideas, go to girlsgotech.org.

Ad Council.org

Girl Scouts.

A Healthy Contract

NEW YORK While Associations across the country struggle to win solid health insurance coverage, the **Oneonta Teachers Association (OTA)** recently won a contract for teachers that includes a 4 percent salary increase in each of three years—and adds health coverage for retirees. A yearlong campaign drew the support of education advocates from across the city.

"By taking the high road and running a dignified campaign, we were able to increase positive perceptions of the OTA internally and externally," says Tim Nobiling, OTA president. "The district has shown that it can pay health benefits to retirees, while members are willing to help the district meet the cost."

Speak No Evil

ILLINOIS Four members of the **Illinois Education Association (IEA)** were reassigned to teach different grade levels at different schools as punishment for speaking out against school district proposals. Becky Belt, Karen Jenkins, Marsha Land, and Jennifer Lincoln are now suing the district. And IEA is speaking out on their behalf.

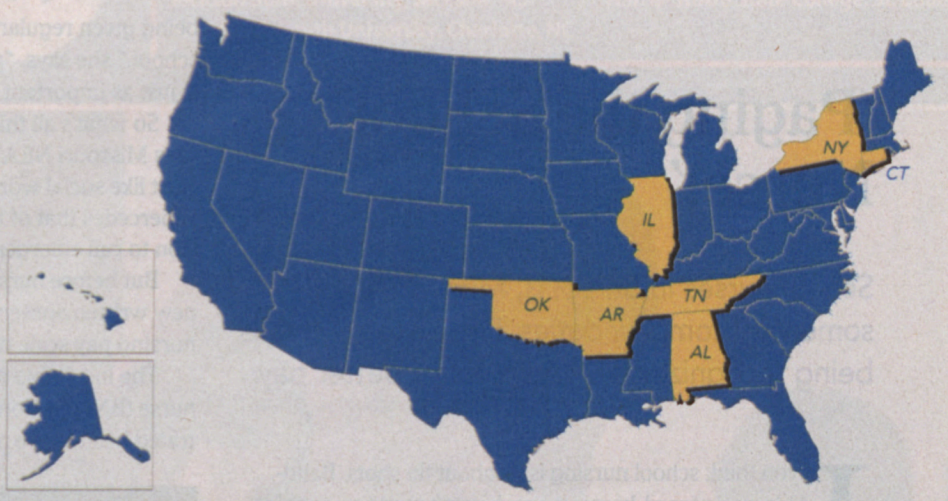
"I am appalled that teachers who exercised their right of free speech to speak out in defense of students would be punished for their actions," says IEA President Ken Swanson. " The suit is pending.

Kinder Teaching 101

CONNECTICUT **The Connecticut Education Association (CEA),** working with school superintendents and AFT Connecticut, recently won passage of preK legislation that mandates certification of public and private sector preK teachers, starting in 2015.

"This legislation will have a long-term impact and will truly address the achievement gap," says CEA President Rosemary Coyle. "When a child comes to school prepared for learning, it affects the rest of his or her life."

NEA assisted CEA with polling and helped locate national experts for an in-depth preK symposium attended by top state lawmakers.



Fair is Fair

TENNESSEE The **Tennessee Education Association** and other groups have organized statewide workshops to address inequitable tax policies. A recent report by the Tax Structure Study Commission found that the bottom fifth of Tennesseans pay about 12 percent of their income in state and local taxes while the top 1 percent pays about 3.5 percent. Representatives from Tennesseans for Fair Taxation note that low-income families pay a much larger portion of their income to keep schools functioning.

Tiger by the Tail

ARKANSAS Members of the **North Little Rock Education Support Professionals Association (NLRESP)** were floored recently when the school board announced plans to review bids to privatize all transportation services. Worse, the board wanted to take action at its next meeting—just four weeks later. So NLRESP hit the ground running, distributing flyers to parents and speaking at church groups, in business meetings, and with journalists.

"The district did not know it had grabbed onto a tiger," says Peggy Nabors, Arkansas Education Association UniServ Director. "We showed [board members] that the only money saved was from sick leave and retirement benefits." Instead of taking bids, the board voted unanimously not to sub-contract transportation services.

Hands in the Cookie Jar

ALABAMA The **Alabama Education Association (AEA)** helped stymie a bid by state officials to divert money from the state's Education Trust Fund (ETF). Earlier in the year, the governor had proposed allocating $70 million from the ETF for non-education programs.

"AEA stands with the people of Alabama who know that their tax dollars for education are earmarked and will not allow diversion of education money for other purposes," says Paul Hubbert, AEA secretary-treasurer. The growth of ETF revenue and endowment funds will help future education funding problems.

To the Rescue

OKLAHOMA "School employees may think that they can't afford to belong to the **OEA (Oklahoma Education Association),** but the truth is that a school employee can't afford not to," says Carolyn Lewis.

She should know. A former teacher, Lewis recently settled a lawsuit with a school district that unfairly dismissed her as part of a Reduction in Force. After 14 years of teaching, Lewis was reassigned to a new alternative education program that was eliminated within weeks of starting up. Lewis was also terminated with no hope of regaining a job with the district. OEA legal services sued the board for improper dismissal. After two years, Lewis settled her case out of court.

PHOTOS: PHOTODISC; IMAGE CONSTRUCTION: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

'Paging the School Nurse!'

School nurses in St. Louis, Missouri, juggle some very complex duties. Finally, their work is being recognized—in the form of better pay.

If you think school nursing is all about flu shots, Band-Aids, and record-keeping, you haven't made an appointment with St. Louis nurses Susan Davis, Marve Stewart, and Janet Utley. A school health professional in this urban district, they say, is a mentor, role model, "risk manager," and operator of a full-service health clinic—for students and adult staff alike.

The daily workload of a St. Louis nurse can involve everything from home accidents and chronic diseases to tube-feeding and the fallout of social problems. On top of daily injuries, "we see kids dealing with stress at an early age, kids whose parents are incarcerated, chemically dependent, or shot," says Utley, a nurse at Mullanphy Elementary. Indeed, an "amazing" number of students have lost parents, she laments, "and I see a number coming to school tired because they just don't go to bed on time....I'll deal with aches and pains and just can't find a significant cause."

Stewart, a nurse at Metro High School, notes the increasingly high number of students in her district with asthma.

"There are a lot of sick kids here," she says. And that, says Susan Davis, who works at Oak Hill Elementary, requires a lot of parent outreach—and not simply to ensure students are being given regular medication properly. "If kids are hurt at school," she says, "parent perception of the treatment we give is just as important as the outcome."

So what's all this expertise worth in pay? If you consider, says Missouri NEA's (MNEA) Graylon Brown, that nurses are "just like social workers," and that their "medical decision supercedes that of the administrator—right down to the decision to call emergency services," you'd think, well, a lot.

But before nurse members of NEA-St. Louis negotiated a new written agreement last year, the district offered a lowly nursing pay scale of $23,431–$33,380.

The inevitable pricetag: 13 vacancies for 89 registered nurse (RN) positions and some very dedicated, but very frustrated health care professionals.

"Nurses have warm hearts," says **Marve Stewart.** "We're mentors, role models, and we work above and beyond the call of duty."

But school nurses are educators, too, and with MNEA guidance, St. Louis RNs elected a nine-member bargaining team, which carefully briefed district negotiators about comparable nursing salaries elsewhere in the metro region and the complexity of modern-day school nursing.

The data and personal stories worked. The nurses held strong and negotiated a substantial salary increase, retroactive to July 1, 2004, that boosted the pay scale to $32,306–$50,358. And they gained both treatment as "certified" staff and extra pay for nursing team leaders, up to $2,320 a year.

The moral of the story, say the nurses: Stay united, make sure your district understands your work, show respect for "teachers and kids alike," and keep loving what you do. It'll all pay off.

—DAVE WINANS

A Cure for What Ailed Them

The St. Louis school nurse agreement, which went into effect last December, has brought down nurse vacancies, boosted morale, and increased NEA membership.

Small wonder: Long-time vets who had maxed at $33,380 have climbed to $50,358. Their delight is, well, infectious.

"I've always loved my job, even when I wasn't compensated adequately!" says 21-year nurse **Janet Utley.** "This work takes a lot of patience and empathy—you either have it or you don't. It's nice to work with basically healthy people, to do what you can to keep them that way."

And to be paid *professionally* for it.

More ESP stories in this issue:

> Illinois bus driver celebrates 44 years on the job – *Page 12*
> Little Rock ESPs keep privatization at bay – *Page 19*
> NEA fights to boost starting pay for support professionals – *Page 24*

PHOTOS: CHRISTIAN GOODEN

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**Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999

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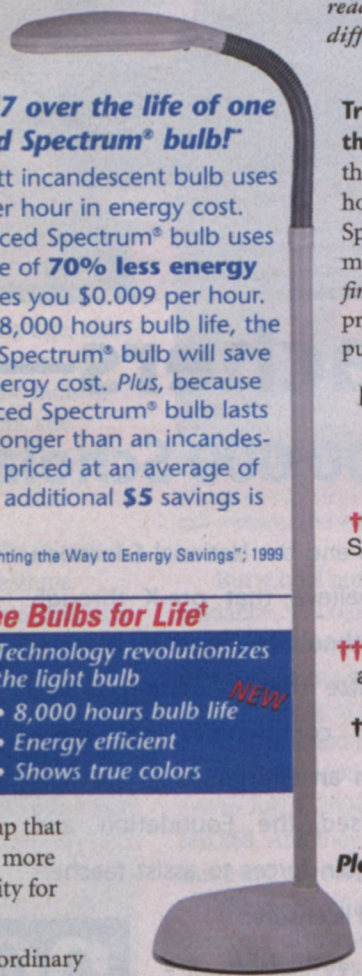

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Will Military Recruiters Get the Boot?

Supreme Court to rule on whether recruiters can be banned from college campuses.

Many higher education institutions deny access to recruiters for employers that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, along with race, sex, and religion. Some schools consider the military to be one of those employers, because under its "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, the U.S. prohibits openly gay men and women from serving in the armed forces.

In 1994, Congress attempted to resolve this conflict by passing the so-called Solomon Amendment, a law mandating equal access for military recruiters. Colleges and universities that refuse to comply with the requirement risk the loss of federal funds.

Claiming that the Solomon Amendment violates their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and association, a group of law schools and law faculties sued. Last year, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the statute because it requires schools to embrace and disseminate the military's message that discrimination against gays and lesbians is acceptable.

Now the U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide whether the federal government can cut off funds to higher education institutions that refuse to allow military representatives to recruit on campus. The Court's decision in the case, *Rumsfeld v. FAIR*, also could impact military recruitment in high schools.

A little-known provision of the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), Section 9528, requires school districts that receive federal funds to furnish military recruiters with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all secondary school students—and it guarantees military representatives the same on-campus access as recruiters for colleges and employers. But parents have the right under NCLB to refuse to allow the release of information about their children, and school districts are required to notify parents of that right.

If the U.S. Supreme Court invalidates the Solomon Amendment, then Section 9528 would also be vulnerable to legal challenge.

Rumsfeld v. FAIR will be argued in December. A decision is not expected until after the first of the year.

'CENTERS OF INFLUENCE'?

It's no secret that the war in Iraq has hurt military enlistment. One clue: The Pentagon has published a "School Recruiting Program Handbook" to help Army personnel enlist high school students. The guide indicates that faculty and support professionals are key components in the strategy to "ensure...total market penetration" of high schools. And, it proclaims ambitiously, "The goal is school ownership that can only lead to a greater number of Army enlistments."

The handbook further cautions that "the relationship between Army recruiters and educators...is a potential source of comfort and conflict for both parties," and directs recruiters to "cultivate coaches, librarians, administrative staff, and teachers" as "COIs [Centers of Influence] in the school."

To this end, the handbook recommends that recruiters "[d]eliver donuts and coffee for the faculty once a month," make presentations to faculty meetings, organize "an exhibition basketball game between the faculty and Army recruiters," dole out gifts to support staff ("pen, calendar, cup, donuts, etc."), and "always remember secretary's week with a card or flowers."

In a related development, the Department of Defense has contracted with a private marketing firm to organize and maintain a "private" database of personal information about potential recruits between the ages of 16 to 25—about 12 million youth—including date of birth, Social Security number ("where available"), address, phone number, e-mail address, ethnicity, gender, grade point average, level of education, field of study, and scores on various tests.

Expressing its desire "to protect the privacy rights of students," the 2005 NEA Representative Assembly voted to support amending federal law to require schools to obtain "specific parental or legal guardian consent before turning over student information to military recruiters."

—MICHAEL D. SIMPSON
NEA OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

PHOTO: CORBIS

The Bill's Come Due

Because of low pay, increasing numbers of teachers and support professionals are moonlighting or just struggling to get by—and many are leaving public schools altogether. Time for a change? Educators say you bet.

BY DAVE WINANS

Imagine yourself a Broken Bow (Nebraska) High School student returning home after a weekend exploring the region's dramatic Sandhills, expansive farmland, winding rivers, and hand-planted forest. Parched, you approach Broken Bow's roadside sno-cone stand, where behind the counter stands BBHS social studies teacher Kirk Petit, "making the world happier, one sno-cone at a time."

Most Broken Bow High students contain their shock. But some kids, being kids, utter the obvious: "Don't they pay you enough as a teacher, Mr. Petit? How many jobs do you have?"

Too many. In his chosen profession, Petit, an 11-year veteran with a master's degree, makes $39,527, has endured two pay freezes, and struggles to feed and shelter his three children, ages 2, 5, and 6. On top of a grueling day of planning, teaching, grading, and track/cross-country coaching at the high school, Petit puts in another seven-day, 30-hour week stocking shelves and ringing up sales at an ALCO discount store during the school year. Come summers, he's dealing sno-cones for extra cash.

Petit loves his day job and says he's definitely in teaching for the long haul. But when switching outfits at 6 p.m. for the second stage of his daily economic marathon, Coach Petit worries. About energy he might not have to do his personal best in the classroom, about time he's losing to "research the best teaching methods," and—quite simply—about "feeding my family."

Educators like Petit know they shouldn't have to choose between serving the public and enjoying a standard of living decent enough to raise a family. Yet far too many do. Drawn by their desire to mold young minds, teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) too often are forced to swallow subpar wages in the bargain.

NEA has set out to change that with a new salary initiative to win a $40,000 minimum salary for every teacher and an "appropriate living wage" as starting pay for all ESPs. The campaign aims to establish NEA as the national advocate and "go-to" organization on professional-level pay for public education em-

Measuring the Pay Gap

(Average teacher starting salaries compared to other occupations)

Accounting (private)	$44,564
Consulting	$49,781
Industrial Engineering	$49,432
Investment Banking	$46,845
Management Trainee	$35,811
Registered Nurse	$38,775
Sales	$37,130
Software Development	$53,729
TEACHING	$29,733

NOTE: AVERAGE STARTING SALARY OFFERS, ACCORDING TO THE SPRING 2005 SALARY SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND EMPLOYERS.

PHOTO: DAVID TOASE

"When the kids see me, they're like: 'Don't they pay you enough as a teacher, Mr. Petit? How many jobs do you have?'"

NEBRASKA MEMBER KIRK PETIT, WHO TEACHES SOCIAL STUDIES, WORKS AT A DEPARTMENT STORE, AND DISHES OUT SNO-CONES EACH SUMMER.

PHOTO: BOB ERVIN

ployees—through research, negotiator training, and partnerships with state affiliates bargaining or lobbying for better pay.

"If we in NEA don't start talking about professional pay now, we're never going to do it," argues Bill Raabe, director of NEA Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy. "We've got to talk about this issue in every forum, not just where it's comfortable."

AMPLE ROOM FOR PROGRESS

As teachers and ESPs across the country can attest, NEA's salary goals are ambitious, given the gap between the goal and salaries nationwide. Union researchers have found that the U.S. average for beginning teacher salaries in 2003–04 (the latest year for which data are available) was $30,496, and that 70 percent of all NEA ESP members today earn less than $25,000.

The salary gap between teaching and other careers starts early. For example, the latest employer survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers documented an alarming gap between average starting pay for teaching and that for professions such as accounting ($44,564) and software design/development ($53,729).

And there's evidence the wage gap is getting worse. Researchers at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a non-partisan think tank, identified 16 professional and managerial occupations comparable to K–12 teaching—from accountant to personnel specialist. Then they compared average pay for these professions with that of teachers. Their finding? The wage gap between teaching and comparable jobs has grown by a whopping 14.8 percent since 1993.

Talk to ESPs and to teachers like Petit, and you'll learn firsthand how members working long hours to help public school children are so poorly compensated that they struggle to provide what their own families deserve.

"Educators should be adequately compensated—so they don't have to worry about paying bills while teaching other people's kids," says Washington State Teacher of the Year Tamara Steen, a middle school English and art teacher in the predominantly Latino agricultural community of Mabton. "Some young teachers are really struggling—their children even qualify for a free and reduced-price lunch—and I know classified employees [ESPs] who clear just $500 to $900 a month after health insurance is taken out of their checks. It shocks me!"

Utah grounds supervisor Roger Pate, who works in the Alpine district, seconds the motion. Every school employee, he says, should have the right to "spend time at home with his or her own kids, without Mom and Dad working for extra income at one of the 'Marts.'"

The fallout from low pay is much more than a matter of teachers and ESPs having to stretch their paychecks a little further. Low pay for public school professionals has serious consequences for public education, for the profession, and, ultimately, for the kids who depend on teachers and ESPs in their classrooms, in the cafeteria, and on the school bus.

LOW SALARIES 'A TURNOFF'

Consider: Who in the future can be lured into an occupation with wages that start low and fail to keep pace with comparable careers? Many young teachers and NEA Student members say they've watched other promising young people show an initial spark for teaching—but then fall by the wayside.

Robin Musch, a first-year elementary special education teacher in St. Francis, Minnesota, recalls education program classmates at the University of South Dakota who switched majors rather than face a career of paltry paychecks and second jobs.

"One decided to become a nurse because she'd get paid more," Musch notes, "and another who wanted to be a biology teacher—he was passionate and loved working with kids—decided to become a doctor instead. Some people would ask me, 'Is going into education all you want to do? Don't you want to do something with your life?'"

"Educators should be adequately compensated—so they don't have to worry about paying bills while teaching other people's kids."

—TAMARA STEEN, WASHINGTON STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR

PHOTOS: DALE FOLKERTS

You Bet You Can

Through a gutsy statewide initiative, New Jersey educators are bargaining better salaries—and stability for the kids.

"When people are comfortable and happy where they work, the students do better."

—JEAN HOVEY (LEFT), PRESIDENT, PLEASANTVILLE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Gaze east from urban Pleasantville, New Jersey, and—badda-boom—there's the Atlantic City skyline. You'd expect Lady Luck to visit teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) in Pleasantville and, until recently, she did—tempting them with Atlantic City's better starting teacher pay and union-scale casino wages.

Talk about turnover. If any district needed, and didn't have, staff stability, it was struggling, multicultural Pleasantville. But that started to change in May, when members of the Pleasantville Education Association (PEA) ratified a contract with the district that boosts the minimum teacher salary to $41,918 and accelerates the starting pay of classroom aides by $7,034 to $20,741 in 2005–06.

Bargaining was no picnic; the parties are still debating staffing and other issues. But the bottom line is that educators can now stay and survive in Pleasantville, thanks to contract gains such as progressively higher "columns for advancement" for secretaries and food service workers, a $4,500 pay adjustment for teachers who teach a sixth period, and full due process rights for all ESPs.

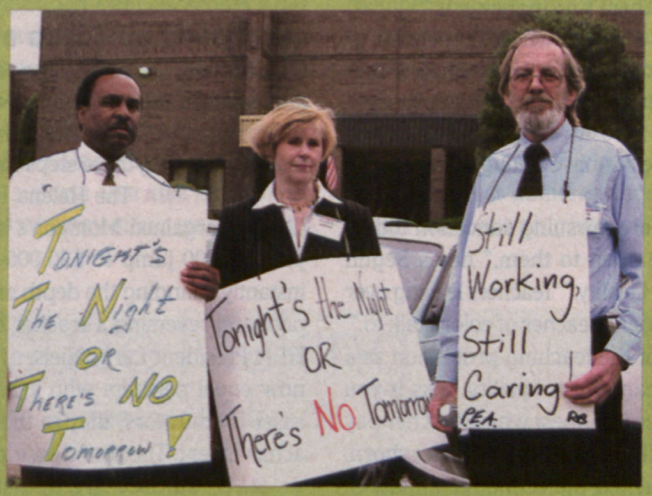
The other bargaining dividends: staff unity and stability. Classroom aide Nelson Cavalier reports that teachers and aides are working together better than ever. Besides that, "No one is leaving now!" adds PEA President Jean Hovey, an eighth-grade teacher at Pleasantville Middle School. "When people are comfortable and happy where they work, the students do better."

Fortunately, Pleasantville's progress isn't an isolated tale. As of mid-summer, New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) local affiliates had negotiated starting teacher salaries of $40,000 or more in 58 percent of the state's districts.

Nope, there's no Miracle Gro pushing the Garden State's bumper crop of good contracts. NJEA just planted the seeds early.

Back in 2001, NJEA launched a "$40K—Right Away" campaign to win "professional, competitive" starting teacher pay in every district. It's a soup-to-nuts program with components such as comprehensive bargaining goals for local negotiators (including "extra percentage increases for ESP groups"), strong salary research and training assistance to local affiliates, and even a member-funded "Pride" campaign to improve the public's perception of public education.

But above all, NJEA's salary initiative hinges on member mobilization. In Pleasantville, that meant:



New Jersey Education Association members make better pay happen by getting involved—in big numbers—at contract time.

BUILDING UNITY. Teachers and ESPs merged their separate locals into PEA and then drafted contract proposals incorporating the best provisions of the old teacher and ESP agreements. "Unity gave us power," stresses school secretary Regina Whaley.

INVOLVING EVERYBODY. PEA members formed a huge, highly representative Action Committee, separate from the bargaining team, that planned rallies, informational picketing, and community outreach—assuring parents that the district's after-school program would not be disrupted during contract talks.

COMMUNICATING CONSTANTLY. The bargaining committee never kept teachers and ESPs in the dark; PEA even enlisted no fewer than 30 folks to prepare individualized salary packets in advance of the contract ratification vote.

Some parting advice from NJEA salary strategists: Build a pay initiative—with both clear goals and a "we're-worth-it" attitude—and the members will come. And come to believe. Through NJEA-run salary workshops, veteran educators are learning that higher starting pay puts more money in the pot for future raises and maximizes everyone's career earnings.

The best payoff of all: At bargaining tables across New Jersey, district negotiators and school boards are now acknowledging the need for a $40,000 minimum to attract the "best and brightest" teaching applicants. And, yes, compete with other NJEA-organized districts.

—D.W.

PHOTO CUFF: BURKE/TRIOLO PRODUCTIONS; PHOTOS: TOM BRIGLIA

"Every school employee should have the right to spend time at home with his or her own kids, without Mom and Dad working for extra income at one of the 'Marts.'"

—UTAH ESP LEADER ROGER PATE

When he was in college, South Carolina fourth-grade teacher Mark Joseph heard a similar tune from childhood friends: "Why do you want to go into teaching? There's no money in it."

As an African-American—in a nation where 40 percent of schools have no teachers of color—Joseph knows he's a role model for his multicultural group of students, getting them to "see African-American males in a positive light and changing negative stereotypes." But he doesn't have enough company—and low pay is one of the reasons.

"Far fewer students of color are pursuing education today; other, better paying careers are open to them," notes Segun Eubanks, director of NEA Teacher Quality. "'Teachers leaving over pay' is an issue for almost every young teacher of color I talk to."

The same could be said about the teaching profession as a whole. Simply put, it's hard to hang on to quality folks if you don't pay them enough. "Turnover is highest where teacher pay is lowest," says Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn, whose fiscal agency has documented the economic impact of teacher turnover. Strayhorn reports that nearly 37,000 teachers leave Texas classrooms each year, "taking their skills to better-paying jobs or simply quitting."

"Some people would ask me, 'Is going into education all you want to do? Don't you want to do something with your life?'"

—ROBIN MUSCH, FIRST-YEAR ELEMENTARY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

It's a Texas-sized problem—but hardly limited to the Lone Star state. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that some 20 percent of new teachers leave the field within their first year, and nearly twice that number leave within three years. Hot issues such as high workload, student misbehavior, and sparse planning time may feed the newbie turnover rate, but poor pay figures right in there. Harvard Graduate School of Education researchers Susan Moore Johnson and Sarah Birkeland write that policy makers must recognize that what teachers earn, in the beginning and throughout their careers, "determines who considers teaching, who gives it a try, and who ultimately stays."

Pay drives ESP career choices too. From his vantage point in Utah, where districts often convert full-time ESP positions to so-called "hourly" slots—without pay or benefits—Roger Pate stresses that employers need to rethink and reward ESPs' unique role, from spotting troubled kids to "freeing up teachers to do what they do well."

PROMISING BUILDING BLOCKS

Clearly, there are compelling reasons to hike educator salaries—and considerable room for growth to reach the goals of NEA's salary initiative. Fortunately, there are some promising building blocks, including these steps forward:

MONTANA The Helena Education Association (HEA) and district bargained Montana's highest teacher minimum—a one-year, $7,000 jump to $30,000—and a new $65,000 maximum, instantly changing the depth and scope of the district's applicant pool and reversing a teacher outflow. It all happened, explains HEA President Larry Nielsen, "because we and the district are now equal partners who agree that the district's number one asset is educators; they're the primary factor affecting student achievement. The confidence level of our members is way up!"

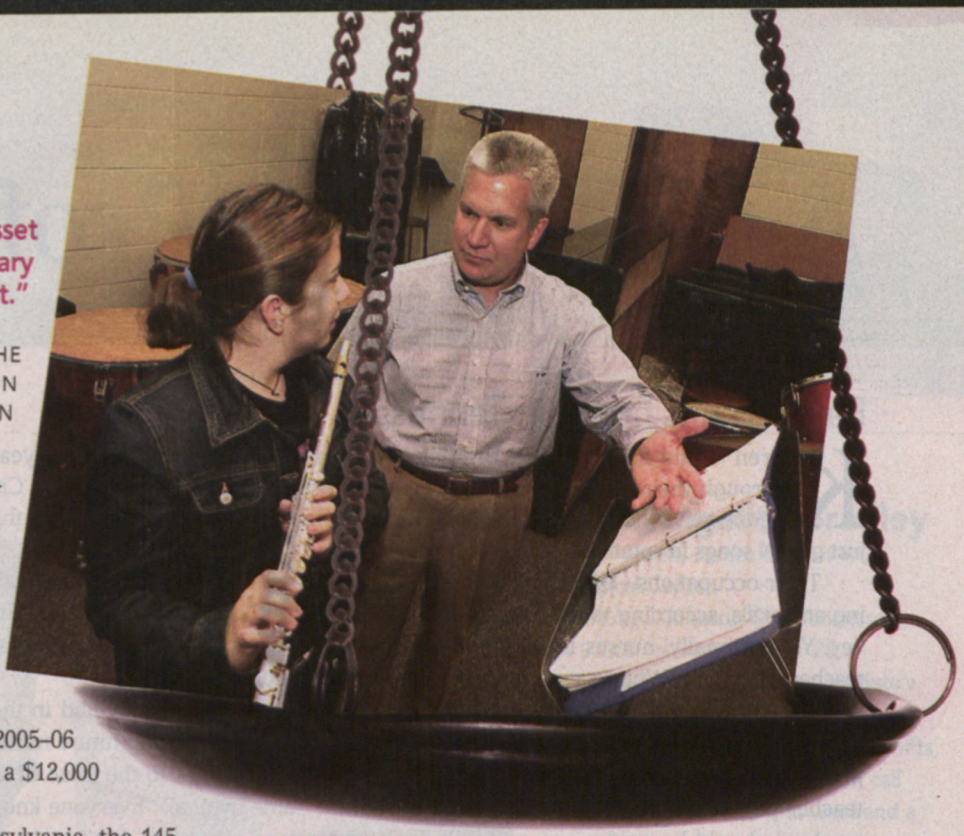
NEW JERSEY By mid-summer, New Jersey Education Association local affiliates had negotiated minimum teacher salaries of $40,000 or more in 58 percent of the state's school districts, from both the wealthiest areas to the poorest regions (for more, see page 27).

HAWAII Following an intensive media campaign spotlighting the state's high teacher turnover, the Hawaii State Teachers Association bargained a statewide contract earlier this year that will, in the 2006–07 school year, boost entry pay for credentialed teachers to $39,900, create a $53,000 average, and boost the top salary to $73,000.

PHOTO SCALE: DON FARRELL; PHOTO LEFT: AMBER WILKES; PHOTO TOP: STEVE WILSON

"The district's number one asset is educators; they're the primary factor affecting student achievement."

—LARRY NIELSEN, PRESIDENT OF THE HELENA (MONTANA) EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



NEW MEXICO In 2003, NEA-New Mexico worked with coalition partners, including business leaders, to pass education reform legislation with a three-tier teacher licensure system and mandated minimums. A second-tier teacher—who has completed an approved mentoring program and three years of teaching on the first tier—is guaranteed at least $40,000 in the 2005–06 school year. The legislation also guarantees a $12,000 minimum salary for education assistants.

PENNSYLVANIA In rural central Pennsylvania, the 145-member Lewisburg Area Education Association (LAEA) negotiated the highest teacher minimum in a 16-district region, going from $38,611 this school year to $39,633 in 2007–08. "Both parties agreed this would help the district and our Association attract and keep the highest qualified candidates," says LAEA President Susan Overdorf, a seventh-grade math teacher.

Struggling ESPs can draw inspiration from classroom aides in Pleasantville, New Jersey, who recently boosted their starting pay to $20,741, and from paraeducators in Ithaca, New York, who bargained a 50 percent hike in their minimum on the heels of a 2001–02 "living wage" campaign involving outreach to the community and area unions. ESP/Ithaca President Debbie Minnick, a Title I math teaching assistant, reports that this settlement "stemmed para turnover" and moved many of her members out of second jobs (and even soup kitchens) and into better living quarters. "Now they feel like they have a career and feel a sense of pride in their union!" she concludes.

Such victories depend on members willing to fight to be paid what they deserve. Nebraska's Petit has prepared testimony on his pay predicament for state legislators and urges fellow NEA members to advocate for professional, competitive pay.

He notes that many educators share his economic struggles, but fail to discuss them with colleagues or people beyond school walls. A big, big mistake, he says.

"Teachers don't use their voice, their greatest strength, and don't realize they're not paid what they're worth," he says. "If educators...just gathered together their collective voice, they could really have a big impact." nea

What You're Making

Average Public School Teacher's Salary ($)

1. Connecticut 57,337	15. Ohio 47,482	27. Vermont 42,007	41. West Virginia 38,461
2. District of Columbia 57,009	National Average 46,752	28. Arizona 41,843	42. Nebraska 38,352
3. California 56,444	16. Georgia 45,988	29. South Carolina ... 41,162	43. Alabama 38,325
4. New Jersey 55,592	17. Indiana 45,791	30. Idaho 41,080	44. New Mexico 38,067
5. New York 55,181	18. Hawaii 45,479	31. Florida 40,604	45. Missouri 38,006
6. Michigan 54,412	19. Washington 45,434	32. Texas 40,476	46. Louisiana 37,918
7. Illinois 54,230	20. Minnesota 45,375	33. Tennessee 40,318	47. Montana 37,184
8. Massachusetts 53,181	21. Virginia 43,655	34. Kentucky 40,240	48. Mississippi 35,684
9. Rhode Island 52,261	22. Colorado 43,319	35. Maine 39,864	49. North Dakota 35,441
10. Pennsylvania 51,835	23. North Carolina ... 43,211	36. Wyoming 39,532	50. Oklahoma 35,061
11. Alaska 51,736	24. Wisconsin 42,882	37. Iowa 39,432	51. South Dakota 33,236
12. Maryland 50,261	25. New Hampshire .. 42,689	38. Arkansas 39,314	
13. Delaware 49,366	26. Nevada 42,254	39. Utah 38,976	
14. Oregon 49,169		40. Kansas 38,623	

SOURCE: NEA RESEARCH
FIGURES REFLECT 2003–04 SCHOOL YEAR.

PHOTO: JON EBEL

A Tale of Two Professionals

Pay gap hits home in Tennessee

Karen White and Angelitti Bradley are tight—buddies going back 20 years through their affiliation with the Friendship Baptist Church in Johnson City, Tennessee. And, the way the federal government sees it, they have more than just gospel songs in common.

Their occupations—White is a teacher, Bradley a nurse—require comparable training and skills, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' National Compensation Survey. Yet nationally, nurses make far more in weekly wages ($942) than elementary teachers ($811) like White, says a report by the Economic Policy Institute.

The chronic low pay takes its toll on teachers—in their checkbooks and in their psyches. "It makes me feel unappreciated," says White. "We're training future nuclear physicists but we'll never see that kind of money!" When it comes to the issue of low teacher pay, White and Bradley are singing from the same hymnal. "Everyone knows teachers should be paid more, so I still don't understand why they don't make the money," says Bradley, who does her part by voting for better school funding whenever she has the chance.

At right, a snapshot of the pay gap—and its impact. ➔

NAME: **Karen White**
JOB: First-grade teacher, Cherokee Elementary School
WHERE: Johnson City, Tennessee
YEARS IN THE FIELD: 13
HIGHER EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree and Master of Arts in Teaching
KUDOS: Winner of 2002 national Milken Family Foundation educator award for excellence.
HOURS AT WORK: 40 hours a week by contract, but she puts in an average of 10 additional unpaid hours each week.
ON THE JOB: Arriving each day about 7:30 a.m., White delivers an enriching first-grade curriculum while dealing with computer breakdowns and regular interruptions, as well as juggling parent volunteers and education students from a nearby university. "The unexpected is to be expected," she jokes. After school, it's on to committee meetings. "I try to leave by 4 but tend to leave about 6 or 6:30."
SALARY: $45,000 (plus $2,000 for attaining certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards)
THOUGHTS ON PAY: "I'm a Becky-homeecky. I mend everything that we wear. I buy damaged things in the clothing department because I know I can fix them. And I go to Dollar General a lot—hardly ever to the mall." As for her house, built in 1968: "I look at the subdivisions they're building around me and think, 'Where do those people work? There's no way we can think about spending $300,000 for a house.'"
HER STRESS-BUSTER: "I do modern dance—abstract ballet—with the Mountain Movers group at East Tennessee State University two days a week. Plus I do yoga for exercise."
SPLURGE: "We have a friend in our choir who's a massage therapist, so we get deep tissue massages. It's therapeutic!"
WILL SHE STAY? "I've seriously considered getting more certification and going into administration. But, by golly, I'm a teacher. We shouldn't have to run to another profession to be paid what we're worth."

Salary Resources on the Web

Go to www.neatoday.org and check out the latest on educator pay and related information to keep you up to date and in the know.

TRY OUT the Economic Policy Institute's (EPI) Family Budget Calculator to figure out how to survive in your region. What income do you really need to make ends meet? The costs of goods and services vary across the nation, so this calculator customizes the budgets for every U.S. community—more than 400 in all.

CHECK OUT NEA's latest report on average teacher salaries nationwide.

LEARN MORE about EPI's study showing how teacher pay lags behind that of comparable occupations—even though professional skills and responsibilities are remarkably similar.

FIND OUT the real definition of a "living wage"—and how to get an ESP living wage campaign off the ground in your district.

GET UP to speed on the impact of low pay on the profession and the need for a diverse workforce.

PHOTO SCALE: STOCKDISC

"Everyone knows teachers should be paid more, so I still don't understand why they don't make the money."

—ANGELITTI BRADLEY, NURSE

NAME: **Angelitti Bradley**
JOB: Nurse, James Quillen VA Medical Center
WHERE: Johnson City, Tennessee
YEARS IN THE FIELD: 29
HIGHER EDUCATION: Associate's degree
HOURS AT WORK: Eight-hour shifts, plus regular paid overtime. On call one day a week and one weekend a month.
ON THE JOB: Works in the operating room as a circulator. "At the VA hospital we do every kind of surgery. I do a lot of work with ophthalmology: cataracts, plastic surgery.... I make sure all the equipment is available and afterward, I'm responsible for entering all the paperwork."
SALARY: $54,000 (which includes some extra pay for special projects, such as training other staff on operating room safety)
THOUGHTS ON PAY: "Overall, I'm very happy. To have an associate's degree and make that kind of money is pretty good, I think."
HER STRESS-BUSTER: Friday nights during fall, you can find Bradley and her husband, Joe, at the local high school football games. They also follow—on TV or in person—sports teams from East Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee. "We're BIG sports fans," Bradley laughs.
SPLURGE: "Shopping!"
WILL SHE STAY? "There are certainly tough days, but I know I'll be a nurse my whole career."

PHOTOS: STEVEN BRIDGES

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOG

Students and teachers are chatting it up on Web logs—the latest best thing since the overhead projector.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

When Maeve, a Maine fifth-grader with a mammoth conscience, hears some troubling information about the Mars cocoa farms in West Africa, she doesn't whisper it across the lunch table—she announces it on her blog. Within minutes, her classmates furiously respond, hunting for the M's on their keyboard. "I am never going to buy M&M's again!" types one young activist. "Thank you for this information," writes another.

Junk-food discourse, summer vacation advice, and Red Sox statistics all fly across the wires in Lisa Plourde's writing workshop at the Connors-Emerson School in Bar Harbor, and the rest of Maeve's classmates in Bar Harbor, as well as thousands of teachers across the country.

"It's something that teachers really are starting to get their brains around," says Will Richardson, tech guru at Hunterdon Central Regional High School in New Jersey, and author of the premiere blog on blogging—www.weblogg-ed.com. "There are as many uses for this tool as your imagination can think of."

I have two sisters, a mom, a dad, and I

using fresh technology called Web logs or "blogs." A blog is a Web site that allows its author to type, type, type, and then receive comments from readers in a sort of digital conversation.

Rosie O'Donnell has one, as does NBC weatherman Al Roker. But so do Ally, Emma, Amethyst, Nick, Rebecca, Hadley,

GET BLOGGING!

Many teacher blogs look like personal diaries and serve as virtual lounges, a place to kvetch and share inspiration with colleagues (see page 35 for more.) But the collaborative nature of Web logs also make them valuable instructional tools to connect students and teachers, and provide a new place to create Web-based content.

Post assignments, point kids to current events, and get them psyched about their studies—Richardson did all that as a journalism teacher with a daily Web log. (Read it at http://central.hcrhs.k12.nj.us/journ1/.)

Give online quizzes on it, as one precalculus teacher in Canada does. Or actually transfer some of your classroom dis-

A TECHNO-TIONARY

Hip conversation!

blog: A blog is a Web site where you can write whatever you want, and then visitors to your site can add comments, if they like. Many look like personal diaries. Some have political content.

podcast: This is similar to an audioblog—a person can create audio files and then their listeners can download the file and listen to it whenever they have time. Check out www.podcast.net for a long list of available podcasts.

wiki: A wiki is sort of like a blog. Both are on the Internet and both provide a casual way to write about stuff, but a wiki is written by many people who can edit any part of it. A great example is www.wikipedia.org.

cussions to a virtual room, as some English teachers do.

You know your kids regularly chat it up in cyberspace. So catch that online enthusiasm and steer it toward topics you prefer—such as *Catcher in the Rye*. "It might just be me," writes one teen to his classmates and teacher, "but it seems like everyone, especially teenagers, are just as critical of other people as Holden [the main character] is, or at least in the same ballpark." (Check it out at http://period5english10h.blogspot.com/.)

In Lisa Plourde's classroom, the point is to get kids writing, and the blog does just that. With teens accounting for half of all bloggers, accord-

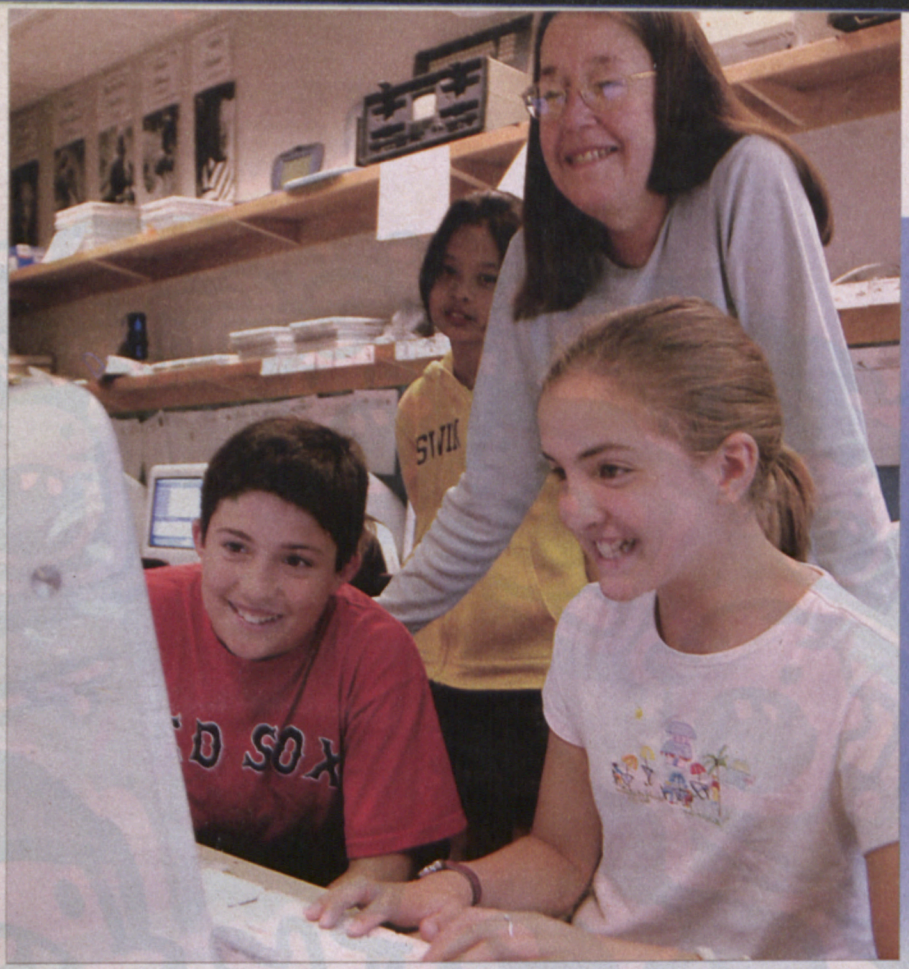
ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL SLOAN

ing to one study, this kind of assignment "speaks their language," says Richardson.

Plourde believes it's the public and immediate nature of blogging that so motivates her kids. "It's like writing in the clouds," she says. Anybody on Earth can read it, although usually it's just Alexa in the other fifth-grade class or Yuxi's mom.

"They don't consider it work!" Plourde marvels.

Plourde would never call herself a techie—she relies on Connors-Emerson's technology teacher Rick Barter to dot her coms. But setting up a blog is simple stuff, he says. You don't need to speak HTML or any other computer dialect. Just visit a Web site like www.blogger.com, walk through its three-step process to setting up a free account, and start writing.



Maine teacher **Lisa Plourde** eavesdrops on a virtual conversation.

MAKING IT WORK

Keep in mind that blogs are public and, if you're allowing students to post entries, you'll want to take precautions that adults wouldn't consider. At Connors-Emerson, all entries and responses are first sent to Plourde, who reviews the content, offers tips on grammar and clarity, and makes sure her students haven't revealed their home address or other personal information.

For Plourde, it's actually easier and quicker than lugging home a tote bag full of papers to correct, she says. Plus, their writing is "self-propelled," on topics they prefer, and in styles of their own choosing. Sean writes persuasively about Alaskan malamutes because he has one; but Bradley, who enjoys historical narratives, pens diary entries as if he's a Victorian girl, the daughter of the Duke of Divaulyn, reluctantly traveling to India with "fabulous gowns."

"Please write more!" Emma (virtually) shouts out. "You are really good at writing from someone's point of view," writes Sarah. (But when Bradley sits down at his desk a few days later, after posting an unrelated poem, he's dismayed. "Nobody commented on my poem!" he complains aloud.)

Their enthusiasm is infectious, but Richardson encourages teachers to move beyond online diaries, like the ones at Connors-Emerson, and consider using Web logs as thinking tools. In his old journalism class, no trees were killed—every assignment was paperless. And, in a growing number of classrooms, particularly at the secondary level, many teachers are discovering that a Web log serves as the perfect catalyst for critical debate.

One kid posts, another responds, a third jumps in with a link to more evidence on the Web. It's a 21st century conversation, and it prepares students for a future where they work with other people, take and give feedback.

When you write on paper, your words are self-contained—"It's on paper and it doesn't go anywhere," Richardson reflects. But when you ask students to blog, "you're asking them to go somewhere." nea

Wow, it is expensive to get treated for rattlesnake bite! I'll remember to try to avoid ge

Turn it up!

Every iMac in the Connors-Emerson lab comes equipped with software called Garageband. It is basically what it sounds like—a venue for amateur musicians to make a little noise.

When Lisa Plourde's students have finished blogging, they start mixing rhythms and instrumental lines to create songs. Take a little piano, something in a George Winston vein, and combine it with a cowbell. (Or not.) Lay down the drums, add an electric guitar line, up the tempo—all right, now we're cooking!

Lest we forget, this is still a writing workshop. So Plourde encourages her young writers to combine their compositions—poetry and music—into single productions. Last year, they completed an audio poetry project, reading aloud their ruminations while their own songs played in the background.

Check it out at http://blue1.emerson .u98.k12.me.us/magazine/audiopoetry05.

PHOTO: BOB DELONG

BLOGGING ON

The stories your colleagues could tell... and do! More than ever, under the anonymous cover of the Internet, teachers are downloading their daily frustrations, aggravations, and occasional satisfactions.

"It's the first thing I do when I get home," says La Maestra, author of A Contar, the daily tale of a bilingual educator in Texas. (At http://acontar.blogspot.com/—but be warned, La Maestra gets an R-rating from us for language!)

For La Maestra or Ms. Frizzle or Posthipchick, the blog isn't just a teaching tool, aimed at motivating students. It's a way to remember the details of their jam-packed day, turn on their inner comedian, and activate their politics. After a day spent basically alone—well, except for those 34 kids—the blog serves as a welcome way to decompress, says the pseudonymous Ms. Frizzle, who writes at http://msfrizzle.blogspot.com/.

It's cheap therapy—and it's particularly valuable for new teachers. You might not want to tell Mrs. Delaney in the next room that you dearly wish you'd looked twice at an accounting degree—but you can freely tell your tales of woe to strangers, who often offer a bit of nonjudgmental advice.

ting bitten at all costs.

"There are books out there about first-year teachers who manage to spin gold out of air, but I wanted to read about teachers who were struggling, who were crying every day, who felt like they weren't making a difference. I couldn't find anything, so I wrote about it instead," said Posthipchick, a first-year teacher in California. (Like almost all bloggers, Ms. Chick keeps her name and location on the down-low, but she told us she's a proud NEA member. For more from her, go to http://posthipchick.blogspot.com/.)

Most of the people who read teacher Web logs are teachers—and their feedback reads like a helpful workshop. "If I write about a problem at school, 10 to 15 teachers may respond with possible solutions or ideas they've tried. If they can't help, they at least provide some good empathy," reports the author of A Series of Inconsequential Events (www.ginnybonk.blogspot.com/).

But many bloggers hope "civilians" are logging on too—if only so they can hear what it's really like to teach. "Everyone in the world has an opinion on education and the state of the public schools, but how many people have been in one recently?" writes Ms. Frizzle. "I blog not to provide definitive answers but to give one teacher's inside perspective."

Echoes the Ramblin' Educat, a young Oklahoma teacher (and building rep for her high school!) who writes at http://educat.blogspot.com/—"I want to show that in a political climate where educators are derided for 'not working hard enough' or 'choosing an easy road,' my friends and I work hard!"

Many teacher Web logs are more overt about their advocacy—they serve to point a wagging finger at the No Child Left Behind law, shout about vouchers, and encourage debate on all sorts of issues. (Check out http://folkbum.blogspot.com/, www.shutupandteach.org, and www.assortedstuff.com/.)

But almost all are just plain entertaining, as your colleagues go whole blog.

ILLUSTRATION: NISHAN AKGULIAN

EXCERPT FROM HIPTEACHER
AN NEA MEMBER IN GEORGIA, WHO BLOGS AT http://hipteacher.typepad.com/

Teachers all over the school, quietly about their business, suddenly perk up, drop everything and start running to the same location. Nearby students look up in wonder. What's going on? When I was a student teacher, I looked up in wonder. What's going on? But today, in the hallway going to duty, I received another reminder that I really am a teacher now.

I felt the fight before I even saw it.

And I ran. I don't know what I thought I was gonna do when I arrived, but, by golly, I ran. I ran with the teachers.

A FIELD GUIDE TO PARENTS

Famed for its vast appetite for information and ability to protect its offspring, the parent genus has nonetheless eluded scientific study. Until now.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

Sometimes it seems like the classroom is a whole world away from your students' homes, and that parents speak another language. (Often they really do.) Making them full partners in their children's education is a challenge—and it can be particularly difficult for new teachers. In this year's MetLife Survey, new teachers said parent communication is tougher than classroom discipline! But you know it's worth the effort—98 percent of educators say they need to work well with parents to be effective—and it is a goal well within reach. So put on your safari boots and take a hike through our guide to understanding that species of human that sometimes confounds us.

PARENTIS HARDTOFINDIS

The Elusive Parent

no. 1

CHARACTERISTICS: Fears predation, retreats fearfully from *Teachis* species. **HABITAT:** Prefers burrows. **MUTATIONS:** Characteristics often grow exaggerated as its offspring age. **HOW TO APPROACH:** It's best to reach out early, in a friendly fashion, to *P. hardtofindis.* During the summer, visit every burrow, just to say hi. Unbelievable but true, sometimes parents are elusive because they're actually afraid of you! When school starts, consider a switch to student-led parent conferences—attendance rates are often higher at those—and offer baby-sitting. (Note: All *Parentis* love snacks!) At school events, give them something: new books, math games, great tips on getting homework done, or just a fun time with the school's bingo cards. Consider calling in *Grandparentis*—they are often eager to explore the school habitat.

PARENTIS AGGRESIVIS
The Angry Parent

no. 2

CHARACTERISTICS: Prickly hide, venomous bite. **MARKINGS:** Reddened face. **CALLS AND SIGNALS:** "Not my child!" **HOW TO AVOID ATTACK:** The Angry Parent can seem threatening, but do not delay encounters! When offspring first shows signs of problems make contact—*P. aggresivis* will have reason to be angry if left out of the loop. If their child's issue isn't immediately resolved, make an appointment to talk and provide evidence of the problem—poor test papers, discipline referrals, etc. Then try to enlist their help by asking questions that make them feel like partners and also the expert on their child: "What can we do?" And don't forget to sincerely thank them for their help. Know there are risks to asking an administrator to join you at the meeting—the parent may feel ambushed or wonder if you lack authority—but definitely do it if you feel at all unsafe.

PARENTIS ENTHUSIASTICUS
The Eager Parent

no. 3

CHARACTERISTICS: Very able hunter and gatherer. **SIZE:** Appears larger than actual. **FOOD:** Loves cupcakes. Avoids peanuts. **HOW TO CULTIVATE:** The Eager Parent is a ball of energy—enthusiastically baking for birthdays and serving sodas on Field Day. These parents will want to yap with you frequently, and likely require a great deal of your time to keep happy and healthy. But *P. enthusiasticus* can be a valuable community member. At the start of the year, survey all *Parentis* to find out where they work, what they do for fun, and whether they have specific interests that you can use in your classroom. Take that information, tap their resources, and you'll be able to start newsletters; have career day at the firehouse; and teach your kids where the money in the bank goes.

PARENTIS OFFICINA
The Busy Parent

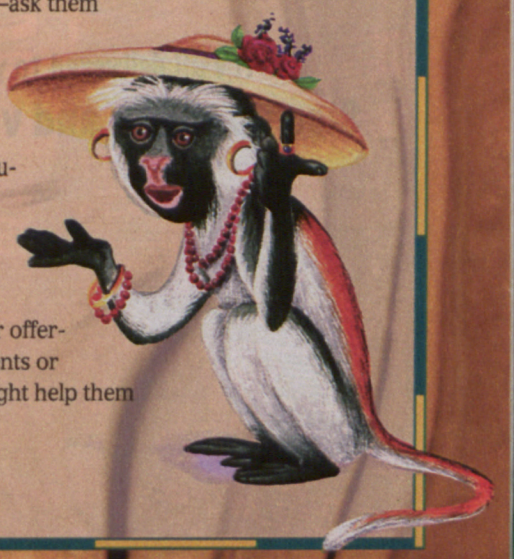
no. 4

CHARACTERISTICS: Very fast land speed, rivaling the great cats. **HABITAT:** Spends most time in large, messy vehicles. **CALLS AND SIGNALS:** "Just a minute!" **HOW TO CATCH:** The Busy Parent is usually a working parent. (You understand this because many of you are too!) On parent conference days, you may have to extend hours from the early morning to late evening to accommodate their schedules. *P. officina* probably want to stay in touch, but believe they don't have the time. Get their cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses, and provide yours too. Regardless of response, continue to send home their children's work on a regular basis, including writing samples, artwork, and test copies—and try taking photos of class activities to include.

PARENTIS DIFFRALINGUA
The English-Learning Parent

no. 5

CHARACTERISTICS: Frequent inability to speak *Teachis* language, often difficult to attract to classroom environment. **HABITAT:** Traditionally urban areas, but migratory patterns are wide-ranging. **POPULATION:** About 1 in 15 U.S. children live in *P. diffralingua* homes. **HOW TO REACH:** First learn more about your parents' homeland, language abilities, and their expectations of the school environment. Often, parent liaisons can help. Then reach out with genuine invitations—ask them to celebrate their holidays or share their folktales in your classroom. Make their culture and history a legitimate part of your curriculum. Translate anything you send home and when you host events, make interpreters available and invite the extended family. Consider offering language lessons for parents or other evening classes that might help them help their children.



ILLUSTRATIONS: NANCY HARRISON; PHOTO COLLAGE: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

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Double Deadline

NCLB says teachers and Title I paras should be 'highly qualified' by the end of the school year.

The deadlines just keep on coming with the federal so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), and there are two big ones this school year for teachers and instructional paraprofessionals in Title I schools.

Teachers in "core content" areas, including English, math, and many other subjects, must be "highly qualified" by the end of the school year. So must instructional paras. There's no automatic penalty for districts that don't reach this target, but the law allows federal officials to withhold Title I funds.

Most teachers have already qualified, but the rules make it very hard for some, especially special education teachers who teach several subjects in secondary schools. They must show knowledge equivalent to a college major in each field they teach.

Many special education teachers say their years of success in teaching proves they are qualified. But others say the new standards are worthy. "I may know math," says Austin Naughton, a Pasadena, California, special education teacher with a major in history, "but I don't have the mathematical expertise to explain it in multiple ways so the kids who struggle the most will get it." Naughton says he should be helping a trained math teacher reach these children, not teaching math on his own.

That's not an option for many special education teachers, however.

Tom Blanford, associate director of NEA Teacher Quality, says teachers hired under the old rules should get all the financial support and time they need to requalify under the new ones. Instead, he says, most districts are "throwing it all on the backs of the individual teachers."

Rural schools pose another problem because one teacher may teach several subjects. In May 2003, Alaska's Republican Sen. Ted Stevens invited former Education Secretary Rod Paige to see for himself how the rules play out on the ground. The first problem was getting onto the ground—the airstrip at the remote village Paige planned to visit (student population about 35) was a mass of thawing mud. Paige had to borrow a military Black Hawk helicopter. Afterwards, he gave Alaskans an extra year to get qualified.

Many teachers across the country are meeting the new standards by using a provision of NCLB that resulted from intensive NEA lobbying. It lets teachers become "highly qualified" through a "Highly Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation" (HOUSSE) instead of a written content knowledge test. The HOUSSE can give teachers credit for successful experience in teaching. NEA state affiliates are working hard to get their states to carry out this part of the law in a practical, common-sense way.

NEA has put together a new flow chart filled with boxes and arrows and extra instructions to help teachers navigate the maze leading to the land of "highly qualified."

Education support professionals, meanwhile, are doing some navigating of their own. Last summer, federal officials agreed to postpone the deadline for instructional Title I paras to the end of the school year, in sync with the teachers' deadline. It had been January 8, 2006.

Even the new deadline will be hard for many paras. "Highly qualified" for a para means two years of college, an associate's degree, or equivalent academic skills. The law allows for a local evaluation of skills, but most states are using paper-and-pencil (or computer) tests. Several NEA state affiliates offer programs to help paras qualify.

—ALAIN JEHLEN

Having a problem getting "highly qualified"? Tell your story at www.nea.org/lac/getinvolved.html. Go to www.nea.org/esea/qualification/teacher/index.html for NEA's updated, user-friendly "highly qualified" teacher chart.

ESPs preparing for the ETS ParaPro test can find help at www.nea.org/esphome/issues/refresher-test2.html.

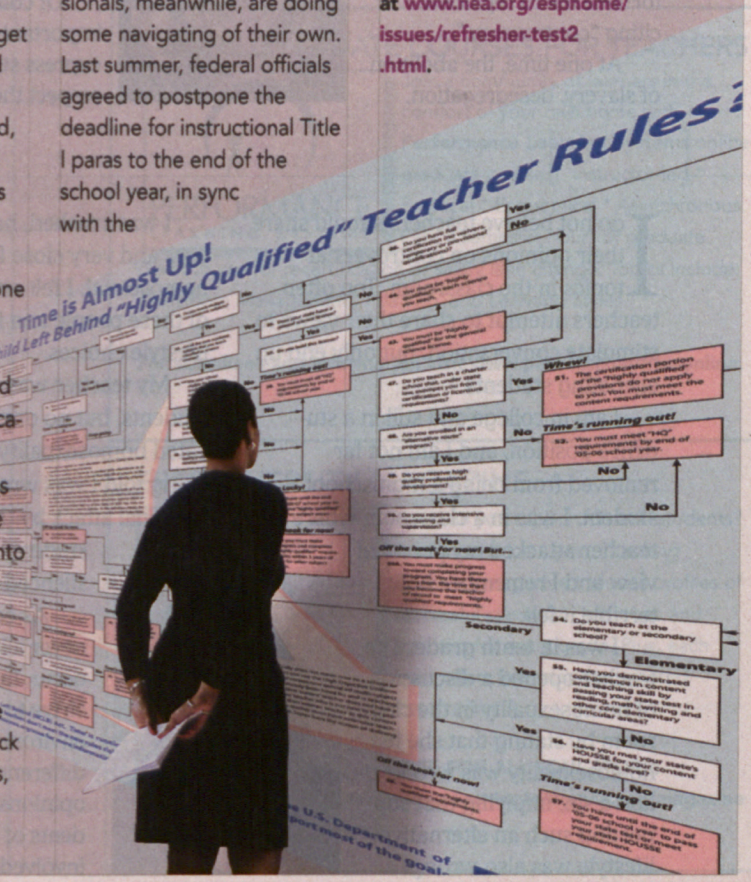
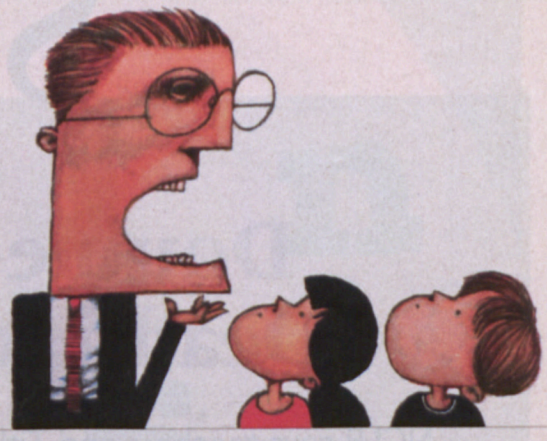


PHOTO: THOMAS BARWICK; PHOTOCOLLAGE: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

Should teachers express their views on controversial topics in class?



YES

If those views support civil and human rights, of course they should!

I believe one cannot advocate for children anywhere without advocating for children everywhere. This means advocating for children in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine as well as in Western and European countries.

Advocating for peace is now considered controversial in my district, as are rainbows and pink triangles ("pro-gay"). Here at Barre City School, I have had a "Safe Space Ally" sign illegally stolen off my door by a former school board member. Our administration forbade me to replace it, citing "controversy."

At one time, the abolition of slavery, desegregation, and women voting were considered controversial topics. But today, we as teachers are freely encouraged to support equal rights around Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, and to examine the effects of prejudice as we study the Holocaust or slavery. We are encouraged to educate students for participation in the democratic process, which depends so much upon the freedom to express dissent.

So the truth is that teachers are supported when they express controversial views, as long as their opinions are aligned with those of the majority.

Of course, it is extremely important for teachers who express strong opinions to respect the fact that some students may feel intimidated. That's why I tell all my students on the first day of school not to believe anything I say just because I say it.

I urge them to turn a critical eye toward their teachers as well as toward their studies.

They trust me to help create a safe environment in which unpopular sentiments may be expressed and responded to in appropriate, kind ways.

The best teachers teach students to think for themselves.

RACHAEL RICE is an artist and activist who teaches fifth- to eighth-grade art at Barre City Elementary and Middle School in Barre, Vermont.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should teachers express their views on controversial topics in class? To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should teachers eat lunch with their students? If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Cindy Long, **clong@nea.org.**

NO

I do not believe teachers should share their opinions on controversial topics in the classroom. Too often teachers attempt to share their views to stimulate conversation, but only end up alienating students.

I am in college and still in a student's position, and I am not far removed from being a high school student. I was in a classroom where a teacher attacked my personal view and I remember how terrible it felt.

I was in tenth grade. The teacher opened a discussion of homosexuality in the classroom by stating that she felt homosexuality was wrong and a sin, implying that supporting such an alternative lifestyle was also wrong.

I was crushed, having family members and very close friends who were homosexual. I felt attacked for my love of these people and for accepting their lifestyle choices.

My teacher was supported by other students, but no one, not even I, advocated homosexuality. I was afraid of being told I was wrong and feared a personal attack by the teacher or other students. My voice was silenced in the classroom.

As educators, we must never allow this stifling to occur. Instead, we must strive to construct and foster environments that support differences in views and opinions by informing students of all arguments involved. We are in the classroom to guide, inform, and inspire our students.

When I become a teacher, I plan to play devil's advocate on controversial topics. I want my students to hear and consider all sides of an issue.

Impartiality is the key to allowing our students to think and decide their own stances on these topics individually.

Teachers must correct misstatements of facts, but a student's individual opinion should be allowed expression without fear of judgment.

LACEY PITTS is an NEA Student member in Americus, Georgia.

ILLUSTRATION: TED PITTS

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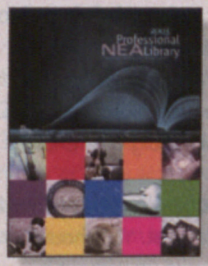

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Have a High-Energy Year!

BY SHEREE CRUTE

You've only been in school a couple of months and you're pumped—moving faster than a speeding seventh grader and able to leap over scope and sequence charts in a single bound. But look out: the demands of job and home life can drain you like kryptonite.

Managing kids all day, working on your feet, staying "on" in front of a class, juggling playground and cafeteria duty, supervising extracurricular activities, and staying up late grading papers and homework can drive you from pumped to pooped in no time at all.

"As the year wears on," confesses Anne Marie Abercrombie, a fifth-grade teacher at Peterstown School #3, in Elizabeth, New Jersey, "I accumulate so much paperwork and excess baggage that I'm just overall, overtired." So how can Abercrombie and other educators recharge their internal batteries and protect themselves from emotional and physical fatigue? Here's what the experts say.

Take an Energy Inventory

Emotional burnout can be part of any high-stress job situation, but teachers may be at special risk, says Mira Kirshenbaum, author of *The Emotional Energy Factor*. "Teachers are caregivers," says Kirshenbaum, "and they're caught in a potential three-way situation, trying to balance the needs of kids, parents, and administrators."

Even if you're that lucky teacher who sails through the day with a minimum amount of stress, other health and lifestyle issues can sap your vitality. If you're staying up late with Leno on the *Tonight Show*, your body may be desperately in need of that extra hour of sleep. "Most people don't recognize a lack of sleep as the problem," says Michael Thorpy, M.D., director of the Sleep-Wake Disorders Center at Montefiore Hospital in New York. "Instead, people say 'I have no energy.'"

What if your work life is under control, you sleep like a baby, and you still find yourself dragging through the day? You may want to take a look at your health, exercise regimen, and eating plan. Medical problems—from diabetes and heart disease to thyroid disease and cancer—can cause severe fatigue, says Thorpy, so see your physician if you're tired all the time.

Any one, or a combination, of these energy drainers may be affecting your vim and vigor. Pick up a pen and pad and, as you read through each category below, make a note of where you may need help, then create your own energy protection plan.

Beat Burnout

Job-related stress can lead to the most debilitating type of energy loss—a drain on your emotional energy. If you don't feel up for the kids, are annoyed at every demand, and you're living for the weekend, that's emotional fatigue.

"And exhaustion, which is part of the stress response, is one of the first symptoms," says Christina Maslach, a professor of psychology and provost at the University of California at Berkeley, who has conducted some of the pioneering research on burnout. Fortunately, says Maslach, you can get relief, even if, like many teachers, you can't banish the piles of paperwork and other demands on your time.

Here are some solutions you'll find in Maslach's new book, *Banishing Burnout: Six Strategies for Improving Your Relationship with Work*.

CALL FOR HELP. Whether it's an industrious student who comes in one afternoon a week, parent volunteers, or a teaching assistant, get some assistance.

DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS. If you can't beat it, organize it. Consider new software to hold files, produce a calendar, and reduce paper. Invest in a class in organizational skills at the local adult education center. The goal: to get all that paper under control.

SEEK SUPPORT! "Co-workers can be of tremendous help to each other," Maslach says. Form groups and share work and solutions. Abercrombie is already practicing this last step. "I'm very involved in my local, Association," she says. "I also cope by trying to help younger teachers with the workload."

Rest Easy

There's no substitute for a good night's sleep. To check for a sleep deficit and to get more zzzzz, follow these steps:

TIME YOURSELF. "An adult needs 7 1/2 to 8 1/2 hours of sleep each night, and even an hour less can make a big difference," cautions Thorpy.

KILL THE ALARM CLOCK. Don't panic! It's just a one- or two-day test. You should actually be able to wake up without it, Thorpy says. "If you can't wake yourself up, you're overtired."

PHOTO: TEO LANNIE

CHECK YOURSELF. Do you hit the pillow and pass out in five? If so, that's actually too quick, Thorpy says. Your body's telling you that you need more rest.

INCREASE YOUR "Z" QUOTIENT. The National Sleep Foundation recommends these steps: Go to bed and get up at a regular time. Have a wind-down routine—a hot bath or a little restful music. Banish the television from the bedroom. Are your mattress and pillow truly comfortable? If you have insomnia, severe sleep apnea, or other problems, go to **www.sleepfoundation.org** to learn where to get help.

Eat for Energy

There's no mystery to eating right for energy, says nutritionist Jeanie Moloo. Stick with small, power-packed meals and snacks and stay low on the food chain. "Re-fuel every three to three-and-one-half hours," recommends Moloo.

DAILY BALANCE. At every meal think protein, complex carbohydrate, and whole grain. If this seems like a lot of food, remember your protein serving is about 3 ounces, no larger than a deck of cards. A serving of grain is 1/2 cup (cooked) whole wheat pasta, or 1/3 cup brown rice. Eat all the vegetables you want, as long as they're not in a fattening sauce or butter. Avoid caffeine, refined sugar, and high-fat fare.

SUPER SNACKS. The healthiest snacks are unsalted nuts or low-fat diary, like yogurt, cheese sticks, or smoothies and fruit.

BEST QUICK PICK-ME-UP. An orange, banana, or bowl full of berries and water. The potassium and vitamin C really help keep you alert.

FAST FOOD FIX. If you can't avoid vending machine chocolate chip cookies, snack on fruit or low-fat protein to slow your body's absorption of the refined sugar and help keep your blood sugar—and therefore your energy levels—stable.

Exercise and Energize

No matter what your energy drain, there's one remedy that can invigorate you and even help you stay calm and balanced throughout the day—exercise! Rather than worry about clearing 30 to 60 minutes of your day for one session, Jan Schroeder, an exercise physiology professor at California State Longbeach, has designed a series of quick stretches and cardio exercises you can do for 5 to 10 minutes throughout the day to get your 30. Add these to your energy protection plan:

FIGURE 4 STRETCH. Sit, place right ankle on left thigh. Put gentle, downward pressure on the right thigh, gently leaning into the stretch. Repeat twice, hold for 20 seconds on each side.

SITTING HIP-FLEXOR STRETCH. Sit sideways on the edge of an armless sturdy chair. Loop back arm over chair back for support. Extend outside leg behind you until you feel the stretch in your hip flexor (where hip meets pelvis). Do twice, hold for 20 seconds, repeat on other side.

CHAIR STANDS. Sit in a sturdy chair. Hold a textbook of some weight in both hands. Pull in your stomach, straighten your back, and then stand up. Once you're standing, raise the book directly over your head. Bring it down to your waist and sit again. Do a set of 10.

DESK PUSH-UPS. Place both hands on your desk. Lean forward and place your weight on your hands, extending your legs back into a diagonal. Start with 10 push-ups, work up to 20.

We each have different energy needs, so work through each set of tips, try different things, and see what works best for you. You can't instantly banish every bad habit, but you can find a way to add a little vitality to your school day! nea

Shall We Dance? *NEA Member Tip*

Margie Dykes is the head of the health and fitness department at Montwood High School in El Paso, Texas, but her real talent is teaching dance. Dykes, who has been teaching for 23 years, says "There's nothing better for kids and teachers than increasing the blood flow to the brain. Movement enhances concentration and helps you stay energized for the rest of the day." Dykes suggests you get the kids up out of their chairs and encourage them to move for at least 10 minutes before or during class. To make sure you stay fit too: no slacking. Hang in there with the kids every step of the way.

FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KIDS:

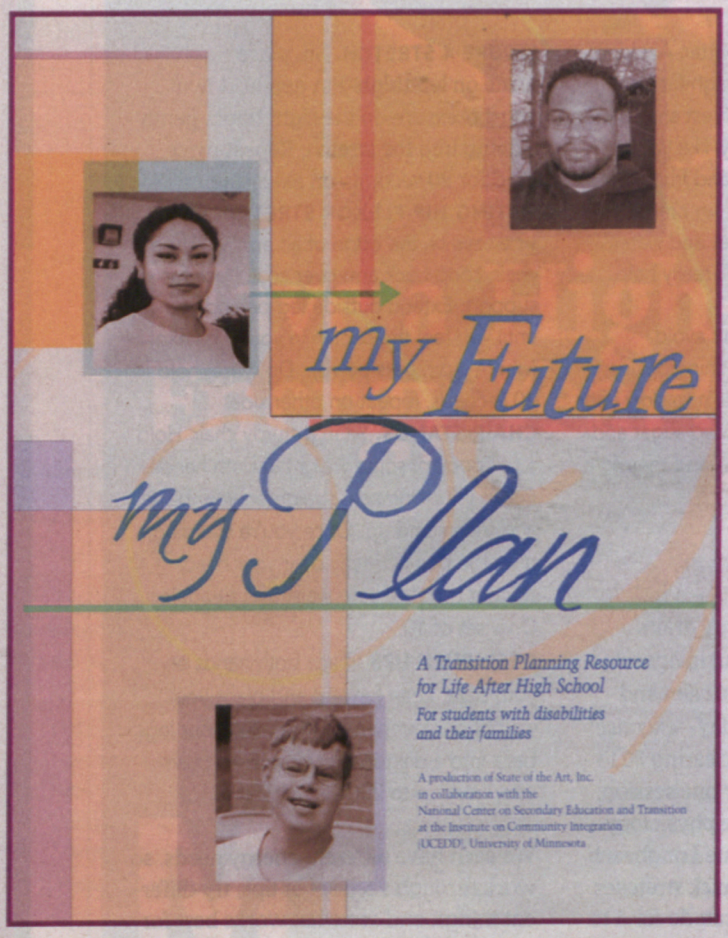
1. Play some some fast-moving music with a solid beat.
2. Warm up the kids with 20 jumping jacks.
3. Now, dance…dance…dance. (All your students may not be able to move with the same ease, so dance freestyle to the music or do an easy line dance like the Electric Slide. It's especially fun to go retro and teach them a dance you did "back in the day.")

Whatever you do, remember, the idea is to stay fit and have fun!

FOR MIDDLE (AND EVEN HIGH) SCHOOL KIDS:

1. Pick an aerobics tape. Each song will be 124 to 136 beats per minute, perfect for a good workout.
2. Warm up with some good stretches.
3. Now workout! Encourage students to use their own steps and invite different students to lead the class each day with workout moves of their own. If your middle or high school students are just too cool to participate, throw a fit—party that is. Invite them to bring some good dance music—just make sure you or another adult check it out first—and let everyone dance freestyle.

ILLUSTRATION: JOHANNA HANTEL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my Plan
A Transition Planning Resource
for Life After High School
For students with disabilities
and their families
A production of State of the Art, Inc.
in collaboration with the
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at the Institute on Community Integration
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Life doesn't end after high school

But for students with disabilities, planning for that transition can be challenging. Now, students with IEPs are required by law to have a transition plan in place by age 14.

My Future My Plan is a transition planning resource that encourages early, student-centered transition planning for students with disabilities. This three-part resource includes:

- A 30-minute videotape and discussion guide
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- A 36-page companion guide to the student workbook with suggestions for teachers and family members on how they can support students in the transition planning process

Available in both English and Spanish, *My Future My Plan* is a "must have" resource for special and general education teachers, families and students.

Published by State of the Art Inc. (2003)

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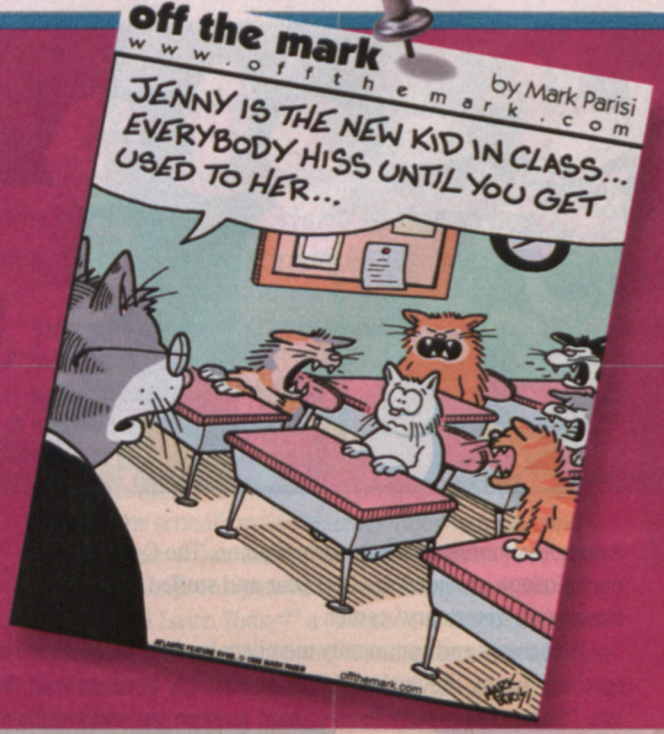
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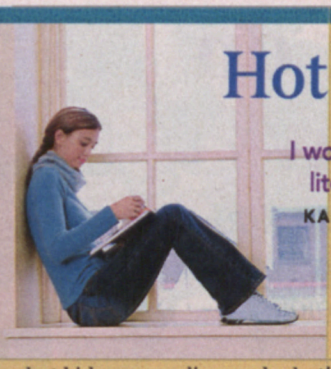
Hot Teen Books



I would like to know what popular literature teenagers are reading.
KAREN BEAN Newport News, Virginia

ANSWER: Go to your school's best resource: the library media specialist. He or she knows what kids are reading and what's new in literature.

As a library media specialist, I meet with my teachers monthly to find out what they'll be teaching so I can provide materials and recommend what they might want to read with the kids.

PATTY ROE *St. Louis, Missouri*

ANSWER: This list was written by my students. I am in a very liberal district so I have no troubles with censorship. The books are primarily designed for adults, which is why the kids like them:

1) *Big Trouble* by Dave Barry
2) *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold
3) *The Lost Legends of New Jersey*
4) *The Pilot's Wife* by Anita Shreve
5) *Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris

EMILY FARRELL *English teacher, Wallingford, Pennsylvania*

Find more hot books at: www.nea.org/neatodayextra

ANSWER: Try the list on the American Library Association Web site, www.ala.org. It is updated often.

JELANA MOSLEY
Ardmore, Oklahoma

Stop Teen Violence

We are preparing a Web site with as many resources as possible for preventing teen violence: dating concerns, bullying, sexual assault, binge drinking, suicide prevention, unhealthy relationships, etc. Any suggestions?

JANA DABNEY *teacher, Chickasha, Oklahoma*

TOP TIPS

Draw a Word

I have a student who could not memorize his easy spelling words—farm, park, corn, etc. He was frustrated and so was I.

I knew he loved to draw. So one day, I had him draw a farm, a park, and corn. His whole demeanor changed—he absolutely loved this! After each drawing, I had him orally spell the word. He got it!

I told him he could use his pictures when he took his test. (No words were on the paper.) He received 100 percent!

You could modify this with higher functioning students by having them draw a symbol just for hard words, not for the entire list.

NANCY GRANT, Special education teacher, Villisca, Iowa

Stay in Touch

As a first-grade teacher I am in a great position to see my students succeed as they progress through school. I keep my class list each year, and as I hear about any achievement a child makes, I send a note acknowledging it. At high school graduation time, I scan the list for former students and send each one a card. I have gotten so many replies telling me how much that meant to the student!

CAROLLYN MAHIEU
Davenport, Iowa

Share your wisdom, ask your question!

How do you keep kids from cheating on tests?

Send your answers to these or other questions on this page to sholcomb@nea.org. Or, send us a question you'd like to see posted. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

For a weekly e-mail of questions, answers, and practical classroom tips, join Works4Me, one of NEA's most popular and useful services. Just send the message "subscribe Works4Me" (without the quotation marks) to Lyris@list.nea.org.

PHOTOS FROM TOP: F64; SW PRODUCTIONS; SW PRODUCTIONS; ILLUSTRATION: CHET PHILLIPS

Find It on Freebay

On kindergarten teacher Randi Beckmann's Freebay Web site, generosity is contagious.

BECKMANN KNOWS A LITTLE KINDNESS can go a long way. That was the motivation behind her Web site www.freebay.com. Now, one year after its launch, this New York teacher's creation has provided dozens of Ithaca City educators with the classroom supplies they sorely needed and some they couldn't even have imagined getting.

"It popped into my mind just how often teachers want something for a lesson and how often people have things to offer," says Beckmann. "The problem was, no one knew how to get things to where they needed to be."

Beckmann solved that problem with a little ingenuity: a Web site that allows visitors to offer or request a variety of regular and unusual school supplies that can make all the difference in a cash-strapped classroom. There's no buying or selling; all transactions are acts of charity.

The listings go far beyond your standard classroom supplies. One donor offered a parakeet as a classroom pet. Another volunteered a baby grand piano. The Cornell Veterinary College provided medical gear and stuffed animals for a classroom "veterinary" center.

As parents and community members become more aware of teachers' needs, they're becoming increasingly involved with the site. "Some people have been so kind as to go out and purchase requested items," Beckmann says. "I call them Freebay Fairies."

Now Beckmann's trying to alert neighboring businesses to the site. She believes corporations have plenty of items they can no longer use but that could be valuable to a school.

"There is a really wonderful feeling of goodwill associated with our site," she says. "When you mention Freebay around here, people smile."

—DANIEL MOISE

Compassion Through Art

Nicole Gnezda hands her problem children paint brushes instead of detention slips.

GNEZDA, A VISUAL ARTS TEACHER at Worthington Kilbourne High School in Ohio, spent her career developing alternatives to conventional models of discipline. In 29 years of teaching art, she's discovered that troubled students often benefit more from compassion and freedom to create than from punishment. That's what inspired her to begin Creative Mondays, a weekly after-school group that allows students to use art as an outlet for their emotions.

Each week, students choose a social issue and get their hands dirty confronting it with paint, markers, newspaper, and other expressive media.

Gnezda has outlined her methods in a book, *Teaching Difficult Students: Blue Jays in the Classroom*, which explains how to work with difficult students and help them with their behaviors. Gnezda peppers her philosophies with colorful anecdotes of her experiences with "blue jays," students she likens to the cackling, aggressive birds whose beauty is often difficult to find.

But is Gnezda's altruistic approach successful? Her blue jays' stories speak for themselves. One is of an emotionally troubled boy who drew violent images. Later, he explained that drawing the pictures kept him from acting them out.

"Students show me," says Gnezda, "in their artwork and in our conversations, very poignant examples of what it means to be a student these days."

—MEGHA RAJAGOPALAN

PHOTO TOP: CHERYL COVELL; BOTTOM: WILL SCHILLING

The Sound of Music

After years of writing songs with her sons, Wisconsin educator Maria Simpson has given her students something to sing about.

THE STAFF AT DEAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, in Wisconsin, discovered an unlikely resource when trying to find fresh material for an annual music concert. Much to their surprise, one of their own second-grade teachers has a hidden knack for songwriting.

"When music teachers write programs, it's expected, explains the school's music teacher, "but when a second-grade teacher writes them, that's pretty special!"

Maria Simpson's penchant for penning tunes led to "What Will I Learn Today?" a collection of original music performed by Dean Elementary's entire second-grade class last February. All of the tunes applied to the students' curriculum, including making change and telling the time.

Simpson first began writing music, mostly ballads and gospel hymns, at age 13. When she became a parent, she drafted instructive ditties to further her sons' development. Now that her boys, Jaron and Taylor, are teenagers, writing music is a collaborative effort. "Writing children's songs with my sons has created a special bond between us," she says. "We have special memories from their toddler years to the present day that have kept us smiling and singing."

Both sons witnessed their mother's labor of love come together at the second-grade concert. The auditorium was filled to capacity with parents, school staff, and students who raved about the magnificent melodies. The program was such a hit, Simpson is already slated to write next year's concert about character development.

"I was teary-eyed throughout the concert because it was a dream come true," says Simpson. "My sons and I have always believed other children would enjoy the songs as much as we did."

—D.M.

Talking Up Family on TV

Retiree Ken Musko tackles the airwaves to help marriages and families.

AFTER RETIRING FROM A TEACHING JOB that had him working with troubled kids and broken families, Ken Musko had one question for his wife, Sandy, "What can we do to help families and keep marriages together?"

Their answer—a faith-based TV talk show featuring experts on marriage and family living—hit the airwaves last month. Musko, a Pennsylvania State Education Association-Retired member who taught for 32 years, hosts *Family Magazine TV,* which airs on select networks (see www.familymagazinetv.com for details). Musko has recorded some 60 episodes of the program, which he says aims to help viewers "keep the love alive for life."

Preparation makes things run smoothly. Musko reads up on his guests, who include well-known authors, artists, and entertainers. He also enlists their help. "We ask them to come up with five questions they would want us to ask them concerning their area of expertise," says Musko. "It's a lot better that way because they know some of the important points."

Some critics blame television and other media for eroding traditional values. Musko's outlook? "Television can be an evil, but it can be a blessing and a good thing too," he says. "Our program is going to bring wholesomeness, it's going to bring values and standards, and these are things that have been neglected."

—EMILY GOODMAN

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Cynthia Kopkowski, section editor, at **ckopkowski@nea.org**.

PHOTO TOP: PETER ZUZGA; BOTTOM: STEVEN DIETZ

resources

48 **Grants & Awards** Does your school have a great character education program? Then apply for a National Schools of Character award.

50 **Take Note** Free broadcast journalism resources available to teachers.

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COMMUNITY LEARNING THROUGH AMERICA'S SCHOOLS, or CLASS Grants, are the NEA Student Program's way of building community support for public education and addressing critical educational and social problems that face our communities. Across the country, NEA Student members are making a difference in their own communities, and to support them, NEA provides grants of up to $1,000 to student chapters that want to launch CLASS projects. CLASS Grants have funded local efforts to:

- have a book drive
- conduct a fund-raiser for school supplies and materials
- offer after-school tutoring
- work with a center for at-risk children
- participate in adult-learning programs
- support Big Brothers-Big Sisters of America Inc.

Tell us how your chapter would like to make a difference in the community, and you could be the recipient of our next CLASS grant! For more information and an application, go to www.nea.org/student-program/programs/class.html or e-mail Kimberly Anderson at kimberlyanderson@nea.org.

NATIONAL SCHOOLS OF CHARACTER

Every year, the Character Education Partnership recognizes 10 K–12 public and private schools and districts as National Schools of Character with awards up to $2,000 each. The National Schools of Character Awards program seeks to: 1) identify exemplary schools and districts to serve as models for others; and 2) help schools and districts improve their efforts in effective character education.

To be eligible, a school must have been engaged in character education for a minimum of three full years, starting no later than December 2002 for the 2006 awards. Districts need to have been engaged in character education for a minimum of four full years, starting no later than December 2001. The application deadline is **December 5, 2005.** For more info and an application, see www.character.org/eventsawards/nsoc/files/2006_nsoc_awards.pdf.

AEROSPACE EDUCATOR GRANTS

The Aerospace Education Foundation's (AEF) Educator Grants provide up to $250 per academic year in support to elementary and secondary classrooms for aerospace education programs, opportunities, and activities when no support is currently available. The program encourages development of innovative aerospace activities within the prescribed curriculum. The program also encourages establishing an active relationship between the school and the local Air Force Association organization.

Applicants may receive up to $250 if they apply by **November 15, 2005.** See www.aef.org/aid/Brochure.pdf, call 800-291-8480, or e-mail AEFstaff@aef.org for information and an application.

TEACHERS STUDY IN JAPAN

The Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher (JFMF) Program provides U.S. primary and secondary school teachers and administrators with the opportunity to participate in three-week study visits to Japan and to return home with a follow-up plan designed to introduce Japanese culture to American students. Each year, up to 600 teachers and administrators, including participants from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, are selected to participate in the JFMF Program.

The JFMF Program fea-

ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTYIMAGES

tures an orientation to Japan followed by visits to primary and secondary schools, teacher training colleges, cultural sites, and industrial facilities. Meetings with Japanese teachers and students and a homestay with a Japanese family are also key components of the program. Participants return home to share their knowledge with students, colleagues, and the local community.

For an application, see www.iie.org/jfmf. The deadline for applications for the 2006 program is **December 10, 2005.** Send an e-mail to jfmf@iie.org or call 888-527-2636 with questions or to request printed materials.

GRANTS FOR YOUTH LEADERS FOR LITERACY

NEA will award up to 20 grants of $500 each to student-led initiatives through Youth Leaders for Literacy, a joint program of NEA and Youth Service America (YSA). The Youth Leaders for Literacy initiative helps youth direct their enthusiasm and creativity into reading-related service projects.

Grant applications should propose youth leadership in developing and implementing a project that begins on NEA's Read Across America Day in March and culminates on YSA's National Youth Service Day in April. Applications must also include a scheduled activity (read-aloud session, trip to the library, bookmaking, etc.) each week of the six-week project period as part of the proposed service project.

Grant applications must be postmarked by **November 21, 2005.** Winners will be announced in December. For more information and an application form, go to www.nea.org/readacross/volunteer/youthleaders.html.

AWARDS FOR STUDENT DOERS

Do Something is a national not-for-profit organization that inspires young people to believe that change is possible, and trains, funds, and mobilizes them to be leaders for change. Each year, the Do Something BRICK Awards honor six outstanding leaders age 18 and under and three outstanding leaders ages 19–25 who use their talents to take action that measurably strengthens their local communities in the areas of community building, health, or the environment. Each winner in the "18 and under" category receives a $5,000 scholarship and a $5,000 grant; winners in the "19–25" category each receive a $10,000 grant. All winners receive pro bono services, media recognition, and the chance to attend the annual BRICK Awards Gala.

Applicants must apply online and any accompanying materials must be *received* at Do Something's office on or before **November 1, 2005.** For more information and to apply, see www.dosomething.org/awards/brick/index.php.

ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The 2006 SeaWorld/Busch Gardens/Fujifilm Environmental Excellence Awards recognize the outstanding efforts of students and teachers across the country who are working at the grassroots level to protect and preserve the environment. This year, eight projects will be selected and each winning group will receive:

- $10,000 to benefit the award-winning project
- an all-expenses-paid trip for three students and one adult leader to SeaWorld Orlando for an awards event
- a Fujifilm digital camera
- 100 T-shirts to share with school and community partners
- an award trophy and certificates for every student/group leader participant.

From the eight projects, one outstanding environmental educator/leader will be recognized and receive:

- $5,000
- an all-expenses-paid trip for themselves and one guest to SeaWorld Orlando for an awards event
- a Fujifilm digital camera
- an all-expenses-paid trip to the 2006 National Science Teachers Association national conference
- an award trophy and certificate.

Project applicants should be able to demonstrate significant accomplishments that have occurred prior to the **November 30, 2005,** application deadline. For more, see www.seaworld.org/conservation-matters/eea/about.htm.

DISNEY TEACHER AWARDS

Disney is accepting nominations for America's most creative teachers until **October 15, 2005.** The program honors teachers whose approaches exemplify creativity in teaching and who inspire a joy of learning in students. PreK–12 teachers are eligible. Nominations can be made online at www.DisneyHand.com or by phoning toll-free, 1-877-282-8322.

Selected honorees will be celebrated at an awards gala and will share teaching strategies with fellow award-winning teachers. Four honorees will be selected as Outstanding Teachers and one will be named the 2006 Disney Teacher of the Year.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TEACHERS TO BECOME LIBRARIANS

Thanks to grants from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, 37 universities, libraries, and library organizations across the country are offering graduate scholarships to teachers who want to become librarians. The funds will provide scholarships of 50, 75, or 90 percent tuition reductions for teachers to become certified school library media specialists.

The scholarships are designed to address the critical shortages of school library professionals by providing financial support for individuals of diverse racial or cultural backgrounds and those whose proximity to library science universities limits their educational opportunities.

Deadlines for applying are **November 15, 2005** (for Spring 2006) and **March 15, 2006** (for Summer 2006). For more about the LAPIS Scholarship application process, go to http://libweb.mansfield.edu/lapis/. Address questions to: Ms. Debra E. Kachel, LAPIS Scholarship Director, at 717-393-6205 or dkachel@mansfield.edu.

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Take Note

UniServ Intern Program

As part of an ongoing commitment to state and local affiliates, NEA is seeking potential eligible candidates for the 2006 UniServ Intern Program. Individuals who successfully complete the four-and-a-half-week training program and the three-month field experience will be certified by NEA as eligible for UniServ staff work in an NEA state or local affiliate.

All individuals must be committed to residential relocation for the three-month field experience and must:

- be an ethnic minority or female as designated by the U.S. Census
- be an active NEA member for at least one year
- have basic knowledge and understanding of the Association at the local/state level
- be committed to pursuing UniServ staff employment upon successful completion of the program
- have excellent interpersonal skills
- be willing to participate in an intensive training
- be willing to resign all Association offices at the local, state, and national levels
- be willing to work in a laboratory learning environment during day and evening hours and committed to learn new skills and attitudes.

NEA does not guarantee employment of UniServ staff, employment is a state/local decision. Persons who are interested in applying for the program should send a letter of interest to: Brenda Vincent, UniServ Intern Program, NEA State Affiliate Relations/Training And Organization Development, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

All letters of interest must be received at NEA by **December 2, 2005,** by U.S. mail or Federal Express. Faxed copies will not be accepted. Letters received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Beginning December 5, 2005, an application packet and instructions will be sent only after a letter of interest is received at the NEA office. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2006. Questions? Call your local UniServ director.

Training on Safety, Bias, and GLBT Issues

Creating great public schools for every child requires that all students are learning and succeeding. Unfortunately, students cannot learn where they do not feel safe and supported. One of the most common forms of bullying and harassment involves differences of sexual orientation and gender, and this targets not only students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered (GLBT), but also students who are not.

NEA is pleased to announce a new training program to address safety, bias, and GLBT issues. This program consists of two workshops, each 90–120 minutes in length, which can be delivered separately or together. The workshops are designed for non-GLBT people who are interested in addressing bias regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

The first workshop, "Taking A Stand: Creating Safe Schools for All Students," is for all school personnel. It uses video clips and hands-on activities to examine the obvious and subtle ways that bias plays

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Program names vary by location. Not all programs are available at every location. Argosy University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association (NCA) (30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602 www.ncahlc.org 1.312.263.0456

*Argosy University/Nashville is a branch location of Argosy University/Atlanta.

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out in schools, and offers resources for creating schools that are safe for all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The second workshop, "Walking the Talk: Classroom Resources for Addressing Bias," is an advanced workshop for K–12 classroom instructors. It examines approaches to designing and integrating activities into the classroom that raise awareness of bias and empower students to advocate for change, especially around anti-GLBT bias.

Over 30 certified trainers in all regions are available to deliver these workshops at little or no cost to schools and affiliates. For more information or to schedule a training, contact NEA Human and Civil Rights, 202-822-7700, hcrinfo@nea.org.

This training is an NEA program, in collaboration with the American Federation of Teachers, the NEA Health Information Network, and the Respect for All Project, and is made possible in part by the financial contributions of the Gill Foundation, the Liberty Education Forum, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Keep the Light On

On **October 20,** more than 7,500 communities and 1 million Americans will rally for after-school programs by participating in the sixth annual **Lights On Afterschool!** This nationwide event calls attention to the importance of after-school programs and the resources required to keep the lights on and the doors open.

Too many children—14.3 million—are missing out on after-school opportunities. When so many families need after-school care, and our young people benefit so greatly from quality after-school programs, these programs should be a national priority.

To find out how you and your school can call attention to this important issue, go to www.afterschoolalliance.org. Those who register will receive free posters, and their events will be promoted to media and the public.

Lights On Afterschool! is a project of the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that all children have access to after-school programs by 2010.

Journalism Made Easy

High school students interested in broadcast or online journalism are encouraged to think inside the box—literally. The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation has created "Broadcast in a Box" to give young students a head start in the journalism field. Free to broadcast journalism educators, the boxed set includes a DVD with actual reporting done by high school students and examples of difficult ethical decisions professional journalists may face, a book with tips for navigating the Internet, a wallet-sized code of ethics, and much more. Teachers will find "Broadcast in a Box" a useful classroom tool with a wealth of resources. To take advantage of this compact opportunity, visit www.rtndf.org/resources/highschool.shtml.

CD-ROMs for Recruitment Efforts and New Educators Available to NEA Locals

THE "RECRUIT, RECLAIM, RETAIN" MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZING CD-ROM provides NEA local associations with resources and tips to build membership models from the ground up and reclaim and retain NEA's current membership base.

Inside you will find:

- innovative membership projects
- training packages
- organizing tips
- NEA resources
- Microsoft PowerPoint presentations on membership
- membership tools and templates.

Be sure to check out the specialized sections on tips and resources to recruit and retain ESP, Higher Ed, Student, and Retired members.

Packed with helpful hints from the real experts—your colleagues across the country—**NEA'S WISDOM ON DEMAND CD-ROM** was developed specifically for NEA members who are new to the classroom. In addition to professional pointers, tools of the trade, and rules of the road from classroom veterans, you'll find the latest on today's hot topics, from No Child Left Behind to Internet-based lesson plans and professional development. Order this interactive CD-ROM today.

For more information, contact clilyquist@nea.org or pwilliams@nea.org. To order 10 or more copies, e-mail NEACD@nea.org. "Recruit, Reclaim, Retain" CD-ROMs cost $2 each and Wisdom on Demand CD-ROMs cost $1.50 each, plus shipping and handling.

NEW TEEN PREGNANCY RESOURCE

NEA·HIN

The NEA Health Information Network and NEA are offering a new teen pregnancy prevention guide. "Promoting Sexual Responsibility: A Teen Pregnancy Prevention Resource for School Employees" is an in-depth publication outlining the scope of the issue, the role schools can play in addressing it, ideas for male involvement, and how special populations are impacted by teen pregnancy. This 160-page publication would be an excellent addition to your existing teen pregnancy resources. The cost of the publication is $22.95 for members and $26.95 for non-members. To order, contact the NEA Professional Library at 800-229-4200 or visit www.nea.org/books.

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A special message to NEA Members and their families affected by Hurricane Katrina

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

If you have any questions about your participation in NEA-sponsored programs as a result of this terrible tragedy

WE CAN HELP

For information and assistance relating to the status of any NEA-sponsored program

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Toll Free:

1-800-637-4636

Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., ET)

Our Member Service Representatives are standing by to answer your questions and help you cope with these difficult times

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HELPING MAKE MEMBERS' LIVES BETTER

This I Believe

Have you heard the new series "This I Believe" on National Public Radio (NPR)? It's a series of radio essays based on a program created by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow in the 1950s. Not only are the essays back, but now there are teaching materials to go with them.

NEA was an early supporter and collaborator on the project, which includes a curriculum guide with lesson plans, writing prompts, writing tips, and a discussion guide. The producers hope teachers will use the writing materials with their students and submit their essays for possible broadcast on NPR.

In the original program, Murrow invited Americans from all walks of life (including students) to submit essays on their most strongly held beliefs. The producers of the new program hope the revival will "create a picture of the American spirit in all its rich complexity."

This series can be heard every Monday, alternating between NPR's "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered." To learn more, listen to essays, and download teaching materials, visit www.npr.org/thisibelieve/getinvolved.html.

Walking on the Moon

Only 12 have walked on the Moon. You could be next—and you only need to head over to an IMAX theater. IMAX, Lockheed Martin, and NASA, along with Tom Hanks and Playtone, have produced the newest IMAX 3-D space film: *Magnificent Desolation: Walking on the Moon 3D*. Through a combination of newly revealed photographs, previously unreleased NASA footage, as well as CGI and live-action renditions of the lunar landscape, moviegoers will be immersed in the life-changing experiences of the 12 men who walked on the Moon—not just the events captured on the news, but what these men saw, heard, felt, thought, and did while on the lunar surface.

To find out when and where *Magnificent Desolation* is playing, go to **www.imax.com/magnificentdesolation**. At this site, you can download an educator's guide to the film and enter the To the Moon sweepstakes for a chance to win a trip for four to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, trips to Space Camp, *From the Earth to the Moon* DVDs, and more.

Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary Teaching Materials

On January 17, 2006, Benjamin Franklin will turn 300, and to celebrate this event, the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary will unveil "Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World," an exhibition of more than 40 interactive multimedia displays and the largest collection of Franklin materials ever assembled. The exhibit opens in Philadelphia on December 15 and will travel to four major museums around the United States.

To augment the experience of visitors to the exhibition, the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary has developed extensive educational materials for teachers at every grade level:

- **Ben Across the Curriculum:** This set of interdisciplinary classroom materials identifies Franklin themes across elementary, middle, and secondary level curricula in multiple subjects. These lesson plans can be used to prepare students before visiting the exhibition or as stand-alone plans.
- **Educational Activity Guide:** This guide includes materials for three educational levels (K–4, 5–8, and 9–12), with customizable activities and materials. The guide facilitates class visits to the exhibition and includes activities to go along with the field trip as well as assessment materials.

The interdisciplinary plans will be posted online at **www.benfranklin300.com** by mid-October, and the educational activity guide will be completed in November and posted on the Web site. The exhibition is made possible by a gift to the nation from The Pew Charitable Trusts, celebrating Benjamin Franklin in the 21st century.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

¡HABLAMOS ESPANOL!

NEA MEMBER BENEFITS is striving to better serve the diverse NEA membership, and we're proud to report about our efforts to reach out to Spanish-speaking members! Programas y Servicios Beneficios Para Miembros De La NEA is the newest brochure available entirely in Spanish that lists all the NEA Member Benefits programs, services, and pertinent contact information.

Our Member Service Center is also on board and able to provide information and answer member questions in both English and Spanish.

To obtain a copy of Programas y Servicios or to inquire in Spanish about NEA Member Benefits programs, call us toll-free at 800-637-4636 and ask for a Spanish-speaking Member Service Representative. NEA Member Benefits: ¡Ayundando A Los Miembros A Tener Una Vida Mejor!

NEA MEMBER BENEFITS is now offering members a viable alternative or a supplement to basic life insurance with the NEA Preferred Accidental Death Insurance Plan through Minnesota Life. This plan covers members who want a large amount of accidental death insurance for a great rate as well as those who might not qualify for term life insurance coverage.

The new Preferred Accidental Death Plan is a guaranteed issue plan—no evidence of insurability (medical exam) is required until age 70. NEA members and their spouses (or domestic partners) are eligible to apply for the coverage, which is available in increments of $250,000 up to $1,000,000.

Find out more about this reasonably priced insurance by calling toll-free, 800-637-4636, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET.

NEA MEMBER BENEFITS HAS OVER 2 MILLION ACCOUNT RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEA MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

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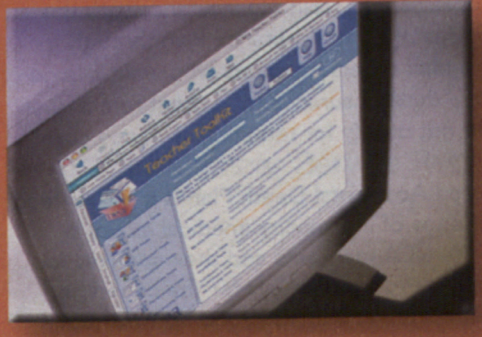

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SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

During a time when Ku Klux Klan members help reinforce Jim Crow laws, "The Ark" provides two young siblings with light-hearted entertainment and small doses of reality. In short chapters, five-year-old Pearl narrates her and her brother Prince's story about leaning on their grandmother for support while their parents search up North for better job opportunities. The two learn how to survive in the segregated South during the Great Depression in Dorothy Carter's touching *Grandma's General Store: The Ark.* 135 pp. $16 from Frances Foster Books. To order, call 888-330-8477.

WEB PAGE BASICS FOR KIDS

A computer scientist (Peter Selfridge) and a 13-year-old student (Benjamin Selfridge) teamed up to write *A Kid's Guide to Creating Web Pages for Home and School,* an easy-to-use primer on using HTML to build projects on the Web. Using a step-by-step approach geared for kids ages 11–16, the book includes plenty of visuals and examples, a glossary, and even touches on the basics of JavaScript. 110 pp. $19.95 from Zephyr Press. To order, go to www.ipgbook.com.

BEAUTIFUL BEGINNINGS

Get lost in this colorful story for readers ages 4 to 8 about the island of Puerto Rico before it was inhabited by Spaniards and when it was known as Boriquén. In *The Golden Flower: A Taino Myth from Puerto Rico,* Nina Jaffe tells Boriquén's beginning through the eyes of an inquisitive boy. The Tainos and their barren land are given a second chance at life when the boy plants some seeds. 28 pp. $14.95 from Arte Publico Press. To order, call 713-173-2999.

SEE SPOT READ

Rover brings joy to siblings Andy and Amy after a long family discussion about which dog to adopt. But beyond the happy ending, *Good Dog, Rover* emphasizes vocabulary development. This level two book in the "I'm Going to READ" series includes a word bank that challenges readers to add a few new words to their vocabulary and to comprehend more complex sentences. For ages 6–7. 29 pp. $11.95 from Sterling Publishing Co. Inc. To order, call 212-532-7160.

DIVERSITY CALENDAR

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 1–31—CZECH HERITAGE MONTH

Na zdraví! Celebrate the culture and language of Americans of Czech descent by downloading the Homelands Gallery Guide, a primer on Czech history and culture, at the National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library, www.ncsml.org/exhibits/current/exhibits-permanent.htm.

OCTOBER 2—MAHATMA GANDHI'S BIRTHDAY

Read about Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, India's legendary leader who practiced non-violent resistance and led his country to independence, at the Official Mahatma Gandhi eArchive & Reference Library, http://web.mahatma.org.in/index.jsp.

OCTOBER 9—ANNIVERSARY OF BENJAMIN BANNEKER'S DEATH

Learn more about the African-American mathematician and astronomer who published his own almanac, surveyed Washington, D.C., and corresponded with Thomas Jefferson, at www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/jb/colonial/banneker_1.

OCTOBER 10—COLUMBUS DAY/DISCOVERERS' DAY

This day honors all explorers and commemorates Columbus's sighting of the New World. Check out 1492: An Ongoing Voyage at www.loc.gov/exhibits/1492.

OCTOBER 13—YOM KIPPUR

The most solemn day of the Jewish year, and one of the most important, Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) is typically spent at synagogue in fasting, reflection, and prayer.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 1–30—AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

This month observes the contributions and unique heritage of our nation's first Americans. Visit www.infoplease.com/spot/aihm1.html for links to information about American Indian terms, place names, tribes, notable American Indians, and more.

NOVEMBER 3—ID AL-FITR

Translated as "festival of breaking the fast," this Muslim day of feasting celebrates the end of Ramadan. Presents are given, new clothes are worn, and special foods are served.

NOVEMBER 12—ELIZABETH CADY STANTON'S BIRTHDAY

Along with Susan B. Anthony, Stanton was the driving force behind the women's suffrage movement. On November 2, 1920, more than 8 million American women voted for the first time. Watch their story on *Not For Ourselves Alone,* a PBS online multimedia movie by Ken Burns at www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/.

NOVEMBER 20–26—NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK

Sponsored by Alliance for Children and Families, this week highlights connections that strengthen and support families. For more, visit www.nationalfamilyweek.org.

Have you ever...

...had to defend public education? Or explain why it's important for every educator to join the Association? If so, you're not alone. But don't worry. Now you can have the answers to the most commonly asked "tough" questions right at your fingertips.

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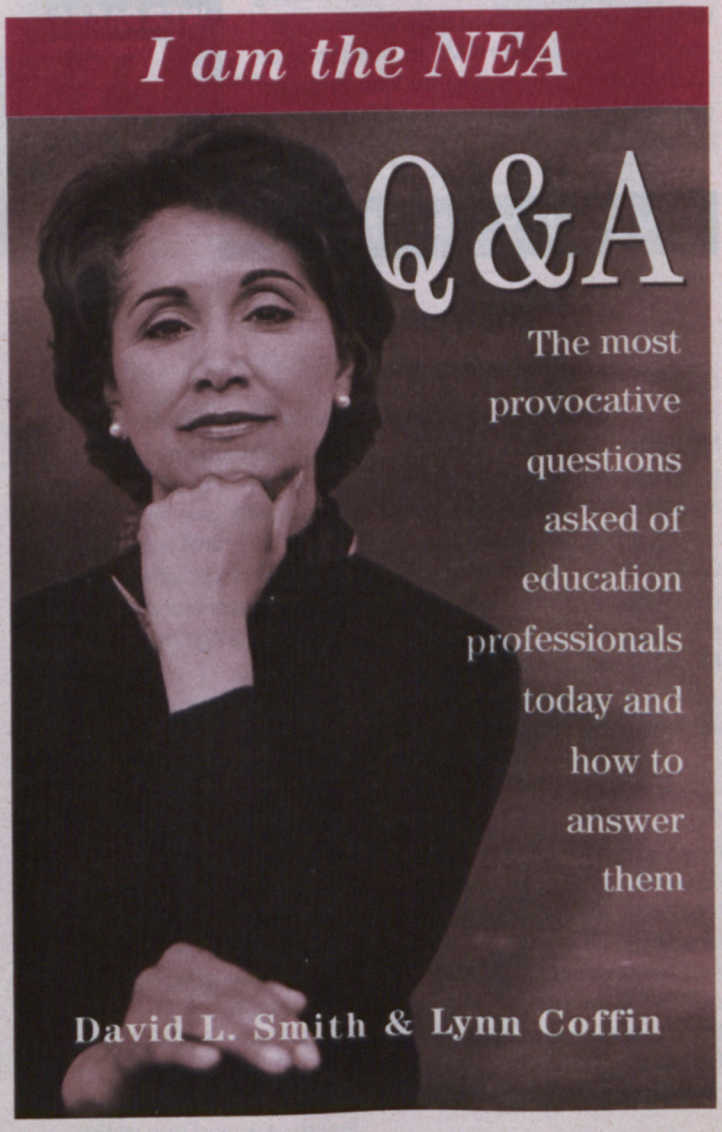
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Q&A
The most provocative questions asked of education professionals today and how to answer them
David L. Smith & Lynn Coffin

DEALING WITH DEATH

Marilyn E. Gootman makes learning how to grieve as painless and soothing as possible in ***When a Friend Dies***. Complete with a list of counseling resources, recommended readings, and inspirational quotes from teens who have lost a friend, Gootman's non-preachy and compassionate book gently handles this sensitive topic. Written for teens, the book teaches readers how to cope with death and where to go if they are unable to cope alone. 105 pp. $9.95 from Free Spirit Publishing. To order, visit www.freespirit.com.

THE MAGIC OF WORDS

Colorful illustrations accompany each poem in the anthology ***Please Bury Me in the Library***. Author J. Patrick Lewis expresses his love for literature in this collection of witty and fun poetry written for children ages 6–9. 32 pp. $16 from Gulliver Books Harcourt, Inc. To order, visit www.harcourtbooks.com.

SCIENCE SECRETS

Air, Water, and Weather, by William Robertson, provides simple explanations and detailed diagrams for the most scientifically challenged teachers and parents. From the "Stop Faking It!" series, the book mixes wit with its wisdom to give readers not only the knowledge, but also the confidence, to teach some science basics and the mechanics behind air, water, and weather. The book includes accurate explanations, irreverent drawings, and activities that use easy-to-find materials. 134 pp. $18.95 from NSTA Press. To order, call 800-277-5300.

THROUGH HER EYES

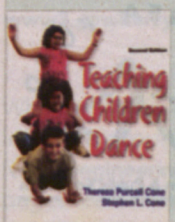
In Robin Friedman's ***The Silent Witness: A True Story of the Civil War***, events from the war are told from a child's perspective when young Lula's home is used as headquarters for one of the generals. Battles on her front lawn and meetings in her parlor makes Lula's house seem anything but homey during this difficult time. With her rag doll by her side, Lula and her family have the unique experience of witnessing one of the most monumental events in American history. 27 pp. $16 from Houghton Mifflin Company. To order, visit www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

TEACHING CHILDREN DANCE

By Theresa Purcell Cone and Stephen L. Cone

Written by a children's dance teacher and a university professor, this book contains a practical approach for presenting creative dance lessons to kids in grades K–5. The book features 20 dance learning experiences and clearly explains the benefits of teaching dance, what to teach, and when to teach it. Detailed illustrations and photographs accompany the more complex descriptions to make learning to dance smooth stepping. 173 pp. $24 from Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc. To order, call 800-747-4457.



LITERACY PLAY

By Sherrie West and Amy Cox

A lot can be done to prepare children for learning how to read before they open their first Dr. Seuss book. Teachers Sherrie West and Amy Cox inform parents and educators of more than 300 dramatic play activities that allow children to have fun while learning pre-reading skills. The book is divided into eight dramatic play areas (such as nature, transportation, and science) that help aspiring readers to increase their vocabulary, communicate with their peers, and recognize environmental print. 240 pp. $19.95 from Gryphon House Inc. To order, call 800-638-0928.

SIMPLY STRATEGIES: ADDITION

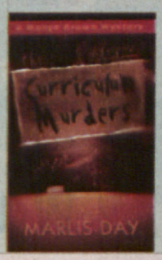
By Lisa Buchholz

Adding is made easy with this book by a first-grade teacher who provides numerous strategies to help elementary students quickly learn the basics of arithmetic. The easy-to-read, reproducible pages allow students to keep a journal tracking their progress and provide flashcards, worksheets so students can practice at home, and many other tools that can lead to excellent performance in elementary math. 97 pp. $17.95 from Green Monster Learning. To order, visit www.GreenMonsterLearning.com.

THE CURRICULUM MURDERS

By Marlis Day

When a teacher suddenly dies on the day of her school's homecoming celebration, Margo Brown, teacher and amateur sleuth, suspects foul play and begins investigating in this murder mystery from middle school language arts educator Marlis Day. The book shows that teachers aren't one-dimensional professionals as Margo Brown attempts to identify and stop the killer before another of her colleagues becomes a victim. 196 pp. $12.95 from Sterling-House Publisher, Inc. To order, call 1-888-542-BOOK.



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- ★ Decisions that affect your job, salary, medical coverage, professional development, and quality of retirement are made by men and women we can help elect.
- ★ Who do you want making decisions about your job … your future? Electing people who understand the value of your work makes a difference in Congress. And, we're making progress.

Some Recent NEA Wins for ESP Members.

- ★ Gained a one-year extension for bus drivers to meet "S Endorsement" requirements.
- ★ Won extension for paraprofessionals to meet "highly qualified" requirements of the so-called No Child Left Behind Act to align with the same deadline as teachers.
- ★ Won inclusion for paraeducators in the Teacher Tax Deduction Law, enabling aides to get a tax deduction for personal purchases of classroom supplies.

ESP contributions to the NEA Fund made these wins possible.

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THE NEA FUND

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The Political Action Committee of the National Education Association

On the Web

REACHING LATINO ELL STUDENTS

A Reading Rockets project, Colorín Colorado, is the first major Web site created to help Spanish-speaking parents teach their children to read. A comprehensive "For Educators" section provides an array of research-based resources for teachers and paraprofessionals who work with English-language learners. The resources can help educators better understand and address the needs of their Latino ELL students, providing tips on everything from the placement and assessment of ELL children to the fostering of stronger parent-teacher partnerships. Check it out at **www.colorincolorado.org**.

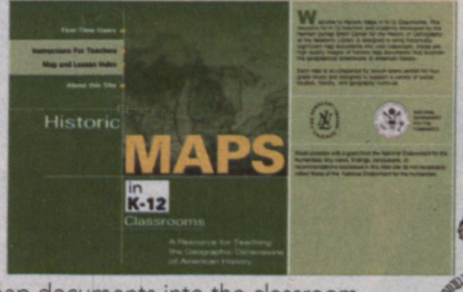
GUIDE TO ENVIRONMENTAL ED

For information on environmental education programs and resources, the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation's Classroom Earth Web site is a one-stop solution. This site provides educators and after-school providers with up-to-date information on the most effective national environmental education programs and materials available, including a top 10 list that outlines the most popular programs for K–12 classrooms. Go to **www.ClassroomEarth.org**.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE...

If attempts at teaching the water cycle are leaving you all wet, visit the U.S. Geological Survey's new site. Brimming with information, the site features detailed descriptions of the cycle's components in addition to helpful graphs and illustrations. As an added bonus, the USGS provides diagrams in 57 languages! Check out **http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/watercycle.html**.

LESSONS WITH MAPS



Developed by the Hermon Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography at the Newberry Library, this resource for K–12 teachers and students brings historically significant map documents into the classroom. Visitors to the site can access images of historic map documents (from 1482 to 1979) and accompanying lesson plans written for four grade levels and designed to support a variety of social studies, history, and geography curricula. Go to **www3.newberry.org/k12maps/**.

ALL ABOUT ENGINEERING

Whether you're a K–12 student or a teacher interested in learning more about engineering, ASEE Engineering K12 Center (**www.engineeringk12.org**) is the site you're looking for. The pages are easy to navigate and filled with information on how to apply engineering principles in the classroom as well as links to numerous university-sponsored outreach programs, profiles of renowned engineers, and accessible engineering articles.

GLOBALIZATION 101

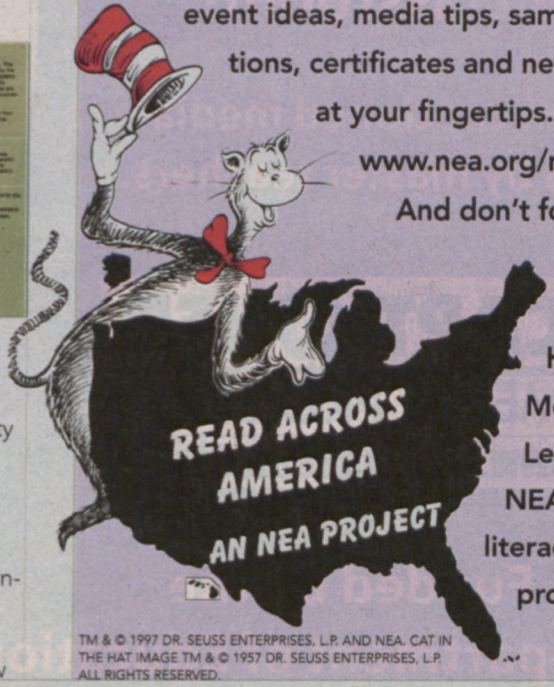
Designed to help high school and college students learn what globalization is, this site provides unbiased, easy-to-understand information about the complex issue of globalization and offers updates on the latest foreign policy issues, international laws, and more. A project of the non-partisan Center for Strategic & International Studies, the site also provides educators with field-tested lesson plans for teaching cross-disciplinary subjects such as international trade, foreign investment, and global technological changes. Go to **www.globalization101.org**.

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

This nonprofit organization addresses policy questions, provides technical assistance, and shares information on school management practices, regulatory procedures, and training models. Located at Utah State University in Logan, it also strives to improve the recruitment, deployment, supervision, and career development of paraeducators. Go to **www.nrcpara.org/** for online resources and information.

Tools You Can Use!

Looking for Read Across America Day ideas? Check out the new online NEA's Read Across America tool kit and media kit. You'll find event ideas, media tips, sample proclamations, certificates and news articles, all at your fingertips. Go to www.nea.org/readacross. And don't forget to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with Lea con La NEA, NEA's Latino literacy outreach program.



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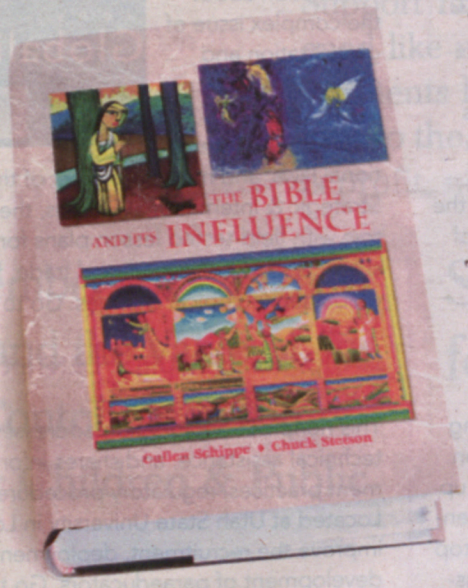

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On TV

MAKING SCHOOLS WORK

PBS, October 5, 9 p.m. ET. Check local listings.

Award-winning reporter Hedrick Smith presents a clear view of the landscape that defines public education reform today. Smith begins by noting that the last four U.S. presidents have pushed for greater nationwide academic achievement, and then carefully gives examples of public schools that have met the challenge. Hour one deals with "turnaround" schools, urban and rural, that have been able to increase test scores in a variety of ways.

Hour two deals with school districts that have been able to take reforms at the individual school level and transform whole districts with varying degrees of success. Along the way, there are some recurring themes, voiced by administrators and teachers. First, all students can learn, regardless of economic or personal circumstances. Second, all the adults in the building,—teachers and parents, staff and school boards—must share the same goal, to improve the learning of students, before reform can happen. Third, there must be a sense of urgency about the work. For more, go to www.pbs.org.

NICK NEWS WITH LINDA ELLERBEE: LOOK BEFORE YOU EAT

Nickelodeon, October 5, 14, and 24, 6 a.m. ET. Check local listings.

Created and produced for kids in grades 4–6, this news magazine special follows Ellerbee as she shares knowledge and tools to help children make healthier eating choices. The program includes kid-friendly recipes demonstrated by chef Emeril Lagasse, and it can be taped and used in the classroom for 10 years with teaching materials at www.nickjr.com/teachers/lesson_plans/look_before_you_eat.jhtml.

DISCOVERING MATH: CONCEPTS IN GEOMETRY

Discovery Channel, October 12, 5 a.m. ET.

This hourlong show introduces triangles, quadrilaterals, circles, polygons, and the history of Greeks and math to students. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year.

TLC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: READING STRATEGIES

The Learning Channel, October 14, 6 a.m. ET.

"Reading Strategies" teaches students how to distinguish words from pictures as they make their way through a town by reading signs. This 30-minute episode is part of a series designed for grades K–6 that consists of segments edited from original documentaries. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years.

DIGGING FOR THE TRUTH

History Channel, October 17 and 18, 6 a.m. ET. Check local listings.

In this series, viewers go on archaeological adventures to investigate the world's greatest ancient mysteries. "Passage to the Maya Underworld" explores the meaning of the Mayan pyramids and airs October 17. "Mystery of the Anasazi" explores the mysterious culture of the Anasazi people and airs October 18. Both shows can be taped and used in the classroom for two years.

BIOGRAPHY—VINCENT VAN GOGH: A STROKE OF GENIUS

A&E, October 19, 7 a.m. ET.

Learn about the iconic artist who, despite being ignored during his own lifetime, created some of the most enduring and treasured masterpieces in history. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years. Teaching materials are available at www.aetv.com/classroom.

EAST MEETS WEST: AMERICANS ON THE MOVE

Discovery Channel, October 20, 5 a.m. ET.

This hourlong program explores the Louisiana Territory, the Trail of Tears, the gold rush in the American West, and the effect the War of 1812 had on internal affairs. It can be taped and used in the classroom for one year.

IN THE MIX—BULLYING...TAKE A STAND!

PBS, October 22, check local listings for times.

Hosted by Erika Harold, Miss America 2003, herself a victim of severe harassment, this solution-oriented program presents a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that includes peer educators in middle and high schools, principals, bystanders, and former bullies. It also raises awareness about the various forms of bullying and harassment (physical, verbal, sexual), and addresses how to deal with the new trend of cyber-bullying. The program has a companion discussion guide at www.inthemix.org/bullying.html.

On TV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and by Cable in the Classroom's Access Learning *magazine at www.ciconline.org.*

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Robots Rule

How immigrant kids from low-income families beat MIT

BY ALLAN CAMERON

As Luis pays out a few more meters of tether, Cristian and Lorenzo manipulate the robotic operating vehicle's (ROV) liquid extraction tube into the toxic stew where it must suck up a witch's brew of dangerous chemicals. The ROV is operating under 3.5 meters of water, and time is running out.

Even if the team can get the toxins on board, they still must maneuver the robot back inside its submarine delivery vehicle—fast. Will the gasket they jury-rigged last night give way, flooding the electronics? The pressure on the vessel's hull is nothing like the pressure on the crew—rookies from the Arizona desert who designed and built the ROV for this one mission.

A new tale from Tom Clancy? No, it's Carl Hayden High School's ROV team competing against the country's top universities for the Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) Center's national ROV title.

Since 2001, several teachers at our inner-city Phoenix public school have created a culture of hands-on engineering that inspires students to exceed their wildest expectations. By building full-sized, pumpkin-throwing trebuchets (catapults), robots, and electric race cars, and entering them in demanding competitions, our students learn what hard fun engineering is.

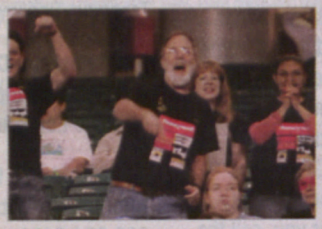
"IF WE CAN DO THIS, so can others. If a school has a football team, it should have a robotics team."

At the 2004 MATE competition, that gasket held and the Carl Hayden Falcons won the national championship, surpassing MIT and other colleges.

Carl Hayden High is in a poor part of town. Students seldom venture from their neighborhood. Most do not know any adult who graduated from college, except for their teachers. They certainly are not aware of the career opportunities available to them in engineering.

Let me be clear that they are not all diamonds in the rough. Our national champions have a wide range of abilities—which they discover they can put to extraordinary use.

Most kids, by the time they are 13, "know" they are not smart enough to get those great technology jobs. But they are wrong. We have taken kids with D's and F's, and in two years, they are college-track.



Allan Cameron and his teammates cheer their robot and its student handlers on to victory.

Incidentally, half of them are girls.

If we can do this, so can others. If a school has a football team, it should have a robotics team.

Of course, our robotics program doesn't eliminate social inequalities. As reported in *Wired* magazine, some of the students who beat MIT went on to hang sheetrock, not to engineering school. But some did go to college, which would never have happened otherwise. Most of our kids have exceeded their parents' education by the time they're in 10th grade.

How do we do it? Instead of lectures and textbooks with the answers in the back, we do the real deal. Our kids are like apprentices. They come in saying, "I don't know anything about robotics." But they see other kids working, and soon they're saying, "What are you doing? Can I help?"

We're doing this for our kids and also for our country. Remember when people talked about "Yankee ingenuity"? Americans were on the cutting edge. But today, a majority of the students in our engineering schools are international. As a nation, we are not producing the technical talent required to sustain our standard of living. But at Carl Hayden High, I'm proud to say we are.

The teachers put in many, many extra hours to make this program go. But we have the pleasure of working with students who are motivated, who want to do more.

...It's the last day of the spring semester and three teachers are working with a dozen students preparing this year's ROV for a June competition. The volunteer team still has to finish waterproofing the electronics case and editing their technical documents. We will postpone vacations until July.

Fredi puts down the soldering iron and says, "Did you see where a California high school competed in the Department of Defense Autonomous Vehicle competition?"

And I'm shaking my head, thinking, "Here we go again...."

ALLAN CAMERON teaches computer science. Go to www.nea.org/neatodayextra for more on robotics competitions. Or contact Cameron at N7UJJ@cox.net.

PHOTOS: STANLEY LEARY

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††All other bank APYs shown in the comparison chart are valid as of 8/31/05; CD APYs are based on balances of $1,000 and terms shown; Money Market APYs are based on balances of $1,000 and yields may be higher for higher balances. Source: *Market Rates Insight*, 8/31/05.

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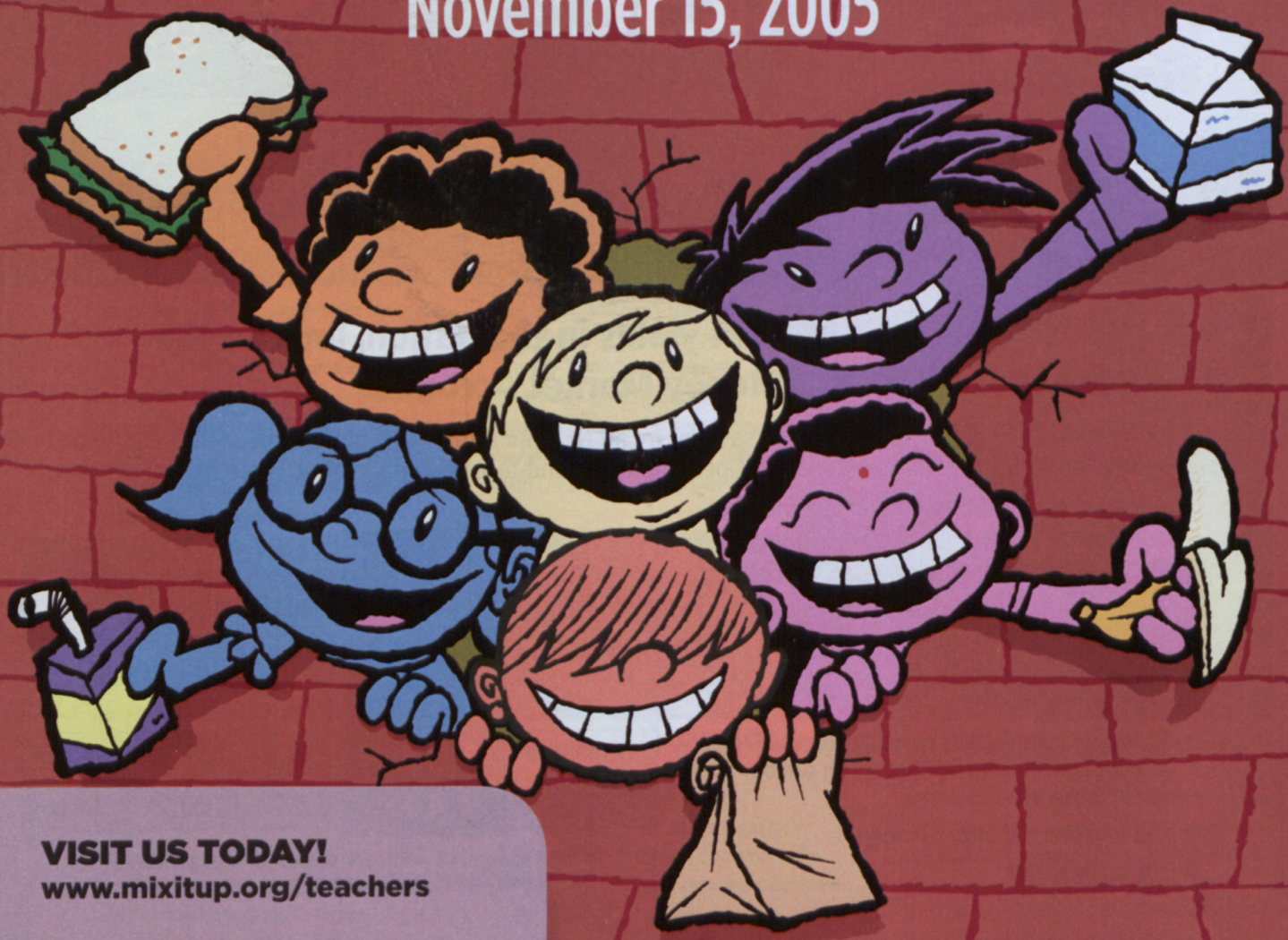

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www.mixitup.org/teachers

- Order a free starter pack
- Get free posters and stickers
- Download free activity booklets
- Share ideas and strategies

"The kids at our school had a great time and are eager to try it again. Thank you for the great materials."
— Oregon elementary school teacher

"Thank you for this terrific activity!"
— Connecticut middle school teacher

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CREATING INCLUSIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Mix It Up at Lunch Day is sponsored by Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

ILLUSTRATION BY ROB COLLINET